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OR,
TOM WORTH'S
Full Hand.

BY DR. WM. MASON TURNER.

CHAPTER I.
THE NIGHT WALK.

One! two! three! four! five! six! seven! came in mellow but half-muffled notes from a distant clock-tower, in the city. The two men, crouched in the thick gloom.

"Ha! seven o'clock, Teddy, and it's time we were off!" said one of the men. "The boss is punctual. S'pose we go?"

"All right, and we had better hurry. Step out, Launce, and see if the coast is clear. We mustn't call attention to our old rat-trap here," pointing to the dilapi-

THEY WERE TWO TALL, BRAWNY, ROUGH-LOOKING, SOOTY AND BEGRIMED MEN, WEARING THE UNDERGROUND DRESS OF MINERS.

dated frame house that reared itself spectrally in the fast-setting darkness.

The man called Launce strode away cautiously in the gloom, and reaching a small knoll, the very eminence of the lofty hill, peered around him in every direction. His scrutiny was rapid, but it was searching. He saw nothing. Not a living soul was stirring on the desolate heights, save themselves, on that dismal evening.

With a low, satisfied chuckle, he hastily returned to his companion, who still stood under the shadow of the old house.

"Nobody is watching us to-night, Teddy, that's certain, and why? Because no one need be out to-night, except such poor devils as you and me!"

The man, rough, grimy and coarse as he was, spoke bitterly—it may be feelingly. For a moment his companion was silent, but then, looking up suddenly, he said:

"Yes, yes, you're right, Launce; we are the only ones who need be out, God knows! and yet I sometimes wonder—if indeed there is a God—that he would look on and see poor men suffer. Well, well; we seldom see daylight, and when we do, even then our time isn't our own." There was a pause again.

"Well, Teddy, it don't matter; so let it be. Everybody has his or her place, and we have ours! But, did you forget it, Teddy? There are others out this nasty night, if there's any truth in man's word. The boss, you know; and his business! Our part in that business, too, eh, Teddy?"

"Yes, I haven't forgot it, depend upon it, for there's money in the work, and money buys bread, and—well, you know it, bread feeds children, and we must do it! Bad luck to the day that put us in his power!" and the man smote his clinched hands together.

"And, Teddy, even then, on that day, we were working for our children; why did he not send us to jail, and be done with it?"

"He uses us better, Launce! As we are in the mud, let us wade it through, through, I tell you! a day of reckoning may yet come!"

"God grant it!"

At that moment a single sounding stroke from the distant clock-bell smote softly, yet distinctly on their ears.

"Come, Teddy; we forget ourselves; that's a quarter past seven, and we must be gone, or it will be too late. See how dark it is now, and it's more than a step from here to Mount Washington road."

"We'll go," replied his companion, buttoning his coat tightly around his throat; "but I'll tell you, Launce Ringwood, this job is the dirtiest of all, and I don't like it, that's all."

Quietly, and with cat-like steps, despite the solitude of the locality, the men emerged from the shadows of the old house into the heavy gloom of the surrounding darkness. Without hesitating they entered a small path leading straight along the edge of the dizzy cliff, which hung directly over the darkly-flowing Monongahela. They threw not their gaze over the intervening river to the suburbs of Birmingham, whose thousands of throats of licking flame and fire shone weirdly on the night, but, with heads bent down, they pursued their way swiftly, and as if thoroughly acquainted with every inch of the ground along the narrow path skirting the frightful ledge. For ten minutes they walked thus, then paused for a moment, and looked around them.

"Can't you trust your feet to the steps, down the hill, Teddy?" asked the one called Launce.

"I had rather not to-night. 'Tis a bad place in the daytime, and though it saves the matter of a mile, yet that's a nasty fall of two hundred feet, Launce, and the steps are slippery."

"My notion, too. We'll go down through the town; 'tis safe and no risk. Come."

The speaker, followed closely by his tall, sturdy companion, turned off at right angles as he spoke, and, crossing the summit of the hill, struck into Stephenson street—at all times lonesome and uninviting, but now doubly dismal, soundless and dreary.

The men had not noticed a figure that had hung on their steps from the moment they had left the old house. That figure, keeping back a convenient distance, had steadily but swiftly followed along the dizzy path; and, when they paused to consult about descending the "steps," the "shadow" had paused too. And, as before, when they strode over the hill, he was again quickly on their track.

"Strange, strange!" this spy muttered. "Did chance bring me, in my wretchedness, to the solitude of this spot for any good purpose? Nay, can I be instrumental in doing anything good under any circumstances? Has not heaven shut out its light from me, so that not a ray of hope can shine through the ominous clouds that envelop me? We'll see; we'll see! Those voices are strangely familiar to me! Is there some villainy afoot? I'll follow them, come what may. Whew! how chilly the noxious wet wind! that searches through you!" He drew his coarse coat up around his ears, and grasping more firmly his stout cane, he likewise entered Stephenson street, and trod cautiously on behind the two night-walkers.

The men in advance took their way down the

deserted street, their pace increasing momentarily, as if they desired to make up for lost time. At length they turned from that street into Bedford avenue, and continued on down, toward the heart of the city. Five minutes afterward, and they appeared in the civilized portion of the city—on Fifth avenue, on which thoroughfare, despite the now unpropitious evening, were many persons, shivering along in the smoky gloom. The light from the shop windows shone murkily, and a kind of unearthly, spectral glamour hung over the half-lit street. The lamps were only burning on one side of the avenue, and this side was speedily shunned by the two rough-looking men. They seemed to court the shade, as they hurried forward, looking neither to the right nor left. At length they turned abruptly into Smithfield street, and in this thoroughfare, as in the last, they took the shady side. The solitary walker, who hung behind them, did the same.

Then came in sight the two lamps standing at the entrance of the bridge over the black Monongahela. The lights were flaring wildly about in the raw wind that swept along the open levee. The men paused, and glanced up and down the dark length of Water street. They were now compelled to go beneath a light, so they boldly strode by, deposited their toll and passed on.

They were under the light but a moment, but that moment was sufficient to reveal them as two tall, brawny, rough-looking, sooty and begrimed men, wearing the underground dress of miners.

Another moment, and he who followed them stood under the flashing lamplight, settling his toll, and he, too, was clad in the rough garb of a miner. Receiving his pennies in change, he strode along after the others over the bridge.

CHAPTER II.

A NOVEMBER DRIZZLE.

It was, indeed, a disagreeable night which glowered down over the smoke-clad city of Pittsburgh. The murky lamplights, now steady and dull—now flaring and flickering, as the heavy gusts occasionally tore through the half-deserted streets, and forced their wet breath through the creaking crevices of the glass—burnt with a half-yellow glare, each separate lamp-top covered by a halo of church-yard white.

It was a genuine November night, and genuine November weather in 1859. All day long, from early dawn, the cold, almost icy drizzle had come down. About four o'clock in the afternoon a rift had appeared in the leaden clouds; a gleam of half-splendid sunshine had shot down, and immediately rainbows were belting, in beautiful arches, the dismal city in all directions.

At the moment when it seemed as if a more auspicious hour was breaking over the place, a handsome, open buggy, drawn by two spirited bays, and driven by a young gentleman, evidently of wealth and fashion, spun across the Suspension Bridge, then up Federal street, and turning suddenly into Stockton avenue, drew up in front of the residence of Richard Harley, Esq.—ex-iron-merchant and millionaire—now the richest man in Alleghany City; his mansion, too, as he prided himself, the lordliest and grandest in that aristocratic suburb of Pittsburgh.

With the skill of an experienced driver he brought his horses up to the curb, uttering a half-exclamation of triumph at his dexterity, and a word of encouragement to his beautiful steeds; then flung the silken reins over the dashboard, and sprung lightly to the walk.

A pair of eyes were watching him from that lordly mansion, for Grace Harley, the only daughter and child of the rich man, stood behind the heavy silken curtains gazing through the French-plate pane, at the driver and his equipage. But there was no welcoming light in Grace Harley's hazel orbs—no warming tinge on the smooth cheek, to tell that the heart was pulsing its rich currents for him who stood outside. Rather, it was, that a half-baleful glare—a vindictive fire, streamed out of the dark brown eye; rather, too, that the warm blood flowed away from the rounded cheek. Certainly, as she turned, half-pettishly from the window, an exclamation of commingled impatience and disdain burst from the coral lips of Grace Harley. Mr. Somerville evidently was not a welcome guest.

As she spoke, a tall form darkened the door, and the stately, aristocratic, moneyed Mr. Harley entered the room.

"Ah! Grace, what is it—what is it?" he exclaimed; for, as he was near the parlor-door, he had heard her half-uttered exclamation.

"Why, papa—why, nothing much," stammered Grace, reddening.

"Nothing much, eh! and yet there is something," said her father, kindly, but positively.

"Well, papa, if you must have it, Mr. Somerville is here again, and on such a dreadful day!"

"Mr. Somerville? He certainly won't hurt you, Grace; he is an excellent young man—worthy of any maiden's regard. And, as for the day, why it has cleared off beautifully, and for a rarity, we have the sun again. See!" and

the father pointed through the curtains at the broad, rich flash of sunlight, which just then entered the room and covered the rich, velvet carpet with its golden glimmer.

"Yes, papa, all true," said Grace, half-dreamily, "but I can't bear Mr. Somerville. I think he is hateful!"

"Grace, Grace, you speak wildly," answered the father, sternly. "Mr. Somerville is the son of my best friend, now deceased; he is a well-educated young man, and, in a word, I like him; he is already rich, and—"

"And, papa—forgive me—that covers all, in your eyes—nay, forgive me, papa, but I know it!"

A frown distorted the forehead of the old ex-merchant; he clinched his hands violently. A hot answer leaped to his lips, but he crushed it back.

Grace cowered not, but patted the carpet with her slippered foot.

"You do me wrong, Grace," at length spoke the father, calmly, as if by an effort, "but let me tell you, daughter, that I fear the memory of that rascal—that minion whom I nurtured—who stole your heart—"

"Sh! sh! papa, I implore you! Speak not of him thus, for— But Mr. Somerville comes."

Steps sounded on the graveled walk without; then in the porch; then the bell jingled loudly, as if rung by a hand that was not afraid to pull it.

In a moment the visitor was admitted and shown into the parlor. Mr. Harley was striding, consequentially, up and down the limits of the elegant apartment, but Grace had shrunk away into a large arm-chair, in a corner of the room, where the shade was greater.

Mr. Somerville was a tall and rather spare man of about twenty-eight. His head was small—too small for one of his stature—and covered with a mass of close-cut black hair. A thin, rather cadaverous face, with an aquiline nose, heavy, protruding lips, the upper shaded by a thick, scrubby mustache, and a small, retreating chin closely shaven, as were his lantern cheeks, did not make a very pleasing countenance, or one calculated to fascinate the susceptibilities of the other sex. But, perhaps, what Somerville failed in, in one respect he made up in another? Perhaps for homeliness of features his rich and elegant apparel compensated. His overcoat, of costliest fabric, was thrown open, disclosing the garments he wore beneath to be made of the finest material and latest mode. The boots he wore and the soft silk hat which he crushed negligently between his large palms—for his hands were, as were his feet, disproportionately large—showed likewise that he commanded money. The large stones sparkling in his spotless shirt front—and the magnificent cluster that twinkled on the little finger of his left hand, which, unlike its fellow—which carried an ivory-handled whip—was ungloved—were the proofs—indeed, they were needed—that Somerville kept a bank account, and that his drafts were honored. But there was something about the half-bluish, half-gray eyes of the young man that struck a chill into your very vitals, for if there is any truth in eyes, Somerville's told of treachery or deceit, it was hard to decide which.

The young man shook hands cordially with the old ex-iron-merchant, and noticing him no further, turned a scrutinizing look around the room.

"Ah! Miss Grace, you are there, are you?" and walking up to where the maiden sat, he bowed obsequiously low.

Grace Harley shuddered as the man approached, and she endeavored to put aside, or not to see his proffered hand. She could do neither, for in an instant his cold, limp, half-wet hand, now hastily ungloved, was thrust into her own warm, velvety, shrinking palm.

"I have called, Miss Grace, with my open buggy and bays, to remind you of a promise to accompany me to the new drive, back of Mount Washington. We have two hours yet, and my horses do not travel slowly," he continued, standing all the time.

For a moment Grace hesitated, but then, as if summoning up her courage, she said, distinctly:

"I am certainly obliged for your kindness, Mr. Somerville, but I think the weather too unpropitious."

"Not at all so, Miss Grace," interrupted the young man, rather rudely, and very earnestly, as an anxious shade flitted over his face. "The weather has cleared, and—"

"Of course it has, Mr. Somerville," in turn interrupted Mr. Harley, rather authoritatively; "and Grace will go with you, and I thank you for your kindness, too. Of course you will go, Grace."

As he spoke, he cast a quick, half-angry look at his daughter. The maiden understood that look.

Rising, with a half-audible murmur, which sounded, indeed, more like a sigh than anything else, the young girl swept out of the room.

And then the gentlemen returned to their conversation.

In a few minutes, covered with ample wrappings, Grace Harley, looking rosy and beautiful,

yet somewhat sad, withal, entered the parlor. No time was lost. They were soon out at the light wagon; the girl was placed tenderly in, packed closely around with a heavy, rich robe, and then, taking the reins, the gentleman spoke lightly to the restive steeds, and away they dashed.

The sun-rift in the clouds soon closed, however, and ere they had been gone five minutes, the smoky canopy apparently denser than ever settled over the city. But Somerville did not turn back. In ten minutes he had crossed the Suspension Bridge and was rattling on up Fifth avenue toward the Smithfield street bridge. Over this they soon passed, and had commenced the ascent of the Mount Washington road.

CHAPTER III.

A DARK SECRET ON THE HILL.

ONE dark night, just a week previous to the evening first mentioned in our story, a tall, thickly-wrapped figure appeared above the steps leading from the cluster of grimy houses below, on the banks of the Monongahela, and for a moment stood panting on the broad plateau of Boyd's Hill. The place was deserted, for the hour was late—certainly not far from midnight. With but a moment's pause, and a cautious glance around, he turned away and took the narrow path running by the brink of the cliff. He continued along this path for a couple of hundred yards; then striking across the summit of the hill, continued on, until he stood under the shadow of a rickety old frame house—the same to the outside of which the reader has been introduced. All was as silent as a churchyard.

The man, after peering around him, stepped softly to the closed door, and looked through the crevices.

No ray of light came out into the darkness. Then he placed his ear to the solid panel and listened for a moment. No sound came forth. He rapped a peculiar rap, on the solid door, but the dull, heavy echo within—sounding supernaturally loud—alone came back.

"All's well—all's well!" he muttered. "They know me well, and they'll come on the minute. What! so late?" as a far-off clock sounded on the night air. "Well, well, they must be near now, and I'll hurry in and look at that keepsake—my 'Dead Secret!' which, like a fool, I have not yet buried from sight. I'll look at it! It nerves me to my work, begun with it! It and my friend here"—drawing a brandy-flask from his side coat-pocket, "will nerve me up to what is yet to be done!" and so saying he drank a deep, full draught. And then he thrust back the flask. For a moment he reeled under the fiery potion, and then again he stood erect.

"Ha! ha!" he laughed, low yet fearlessly to himself, "that is the priceless potion—the elixir of strength—of high courage—nay, of life itself! Now I am strong and now I'll enter."

Using the key drawn from his overcoat pocket, he flung back the bolt and entered the house. All was darkness and gloom within; but suddenly a light burst forth, as if by magic, and in a moment the room was aglow with almost supernatural brilliancy. The light came from a massive chandelier, glittering with pendants and heavy with cut-glass globes hanging from the center of the ceiling. It was evident that the many lights had been burning low, and that the man had suddenly turned them on.

A singular scene of richness and beauty was revealed.

The room of this dilapidated, rickety old shell—as it appeared to be from the outside—was fitted up with all the splendor of an aristocratic parlor. Sofas of richest velvet, chairs of rare value—inlaid tables of cunning workmanship, fairly crowded the limited space of the apartment. A heavy carpet of costliest manufacture covered the floor; and paintings, in richly gilded, massive frames, hung upon the velvet-papered walls.

The man, half reeling, glanced above him and then staggered back and sunk on one of the sumptuous seats.

"Ha! ha!" he exclaimed, "this is my cabin! all mine—and ye gods! the joyous hours that have been mine here, and—but, I forget," he exclaimed, as he quickly arose, and reeling across the room, suddenly rolled down a heavy curtain before the door, thus cutting off all possibility of a tell-tale ray of light penetrating beyond. There was no window whatever to the room!

"'Tis best to be cautious," he said; "it would not do for curiosity-seekers to be drawn here by a straggling light. It's all right now."

He retired to his seat, and for a moment bowed his head between his hands.

The brilliant light from the chandelier shone on an unusually tall and spare man, whose person was wrapped in a heavy overcoat reaching almost to his feet; his face was almost wholly concealed by a mass of long, black, curling whiskers. Over his brow was drawn a broad-brimmed slouched hat. His appearance and his attire certainly were not in keeping with the almost marvelous richness of the chamber; and yet he had called this place his "cabin."

At length he raised his head; it was reeling to and fro.

"By Jove!" he exclaimed, "I took too much of that draught—and I'm not steady enough.

But it will do, and I can drive it away. Ah! my old friends! you that have passed hours of mad revelry with me in this noble old chamber—where are you now? Some are walking, as of old, the broad avenues of sin—*Sin?* Nonsense! There is no such thing as sin as long as money lasts! No, no! The world is a cesspool of sin; it is above, around, beneath us. It is everywhere, and will ever be. But my good friends: some are enjoying themselves—yes, that's better. Others have grown straight-faced and gone back on themselves, the fools! and others are in the churchyard, under the wet grass and the damp, heavy clay! ugh!"

For several moments he sat still, changing not his position, nor saying a word. The wind still sighed and sung dolefully around the old house, and the drear November air crept through the crevices of the door, and swayed the heavy curtain hanging there gently to and fro. The man drew his thick coat more closely around him and shivered as he felt the searching breeze creeping through, and as he noticed the almost supernatural lifting of the curtain, by the door.

"Cold—cold! and yet not so cold as some who are under the wet grass to-night! No, no! but nonsense! Away with such feelings! I must think of other matters."

"What a good thing for me that I saw that little affair that raw evening, away down deep in the mine—nothing though it was, in itself, yet enough to send my good friends to jail—my noble workmen! Ha! ha! poor fools! and they are mine, to the death. They must do this work for me. I've sworn I would triumph, and triumph I shall! She shall be mine, by some or other means. Ye gods! what mad dreams of love! Love? yes, and love of gold, too, have floated over my brain, waking and sleeping, as I have thought of her. And she, so cold, so imperious, so repelling, yet so lovely, so entrancing!"

"Does she love that low-born adventurer yet? It must be. And strange fancies I am impressed with. I have lately seen a face familiar, wondrously similar to his!"

"That for her love for him. All I wish is her hand and her gold, and this move must bring it. The fellows are late," he exclaimed, glancing at a richly-mounted clock on the mantel-piece, the hands of which pointed to one o'clock, "and yet they have never failed me, and they cannot fail me now. They dare not! Have I committed myself to them? Am I the least in their power? No! And if I am, money could buy me clear. I am safe!"

"Now I will look at my guest—my skeleton in the closet—ha, ha! to remind me of him who came between me and the girl I loved—loved!"

He staggered to his feet, and half-lowered the light. Then he paused, and approaching the door, listened intently. But as before, no sound was heard, save the moan of the wind over the bleak hill.

The man stepped back at once, and going to the further wall of the house, reached up and struck on a particular spot a sharp blow. There was no response. He struck again, and yet there was no response.

"Confound it!" he muttered, as he drew a chair close to the wall. Springing upon it he put both hands on the wall and pressed.

Instantly a heavy section of it slowly started, and commenced to descend, the motion being accompanied by a sad kind of creaking as of rusted pulleys and chains.

The man stepped back and drew away the chair, and folding his arms closely and determinedly across his chest, gazed at the descending wall. Slowly it sunk, until a long black box appeared in view, and in it in deathly array lay a bleached skeleton.

At that moment a low, cautious whistle sounded without. Placing his hands again on the sinking section of the wall, by one determined effort the man raised it to its place, where it fitted so nicely that no eye could detect it.

Drawing a pistol and placing it in convenient reach, he approached near the door, answered the whistle and then drew back the bolt. Instantly the door was opened and two large men entered. Then the door was closed again.

It was nearly day when three persons left the house and bent their way toward the city. And then, from the gloom, not fifty yards away, another figure slowly raised itself and followed on leisurely toward the inhabited portion of the sleeping town.

CHAPTER IV.

MOUNT WASHINGTON ROAD—AFTER DARK.

THE miserable rain still descended, and a dismal night settled down on everything.

The open carriage, with its occupants, proceeded slowly—so slowly, indeed, that the restive bays shivered with cold, as they labored on up the rear face of the lofty hill—Mount Washington. It was certainly seven o'clock; the darkness was intense, and the driver cautiously paused now and then, and peered ahead to be certain that he was going in the right direction.

Grace Harley, silent and frightened, shrunk away to the far corner of her seat. The young man carefully, tenderly drew the wrappings closer around her, as if to reassure her.

"I'm so sorry, Miss Grace, that I have brought you into this scrape."

"Say nothing of it, Mr. Somerville. Our object now is to get back as soon as possible. I am chilled through, and papa, I know, is very uneasy about me."

Fairleigh Somerville did not answer at once, but still continued busying himself with the dash-apron, and in tucking in the wrappings around his fair charge.

"'Twas a stupid mistake of mine, Miss Grace," he said, at length. "I took the wrong fork in the road, though I've been this way often enough to have known better. As soon as we clear the precipitous ascent, I can promise you that my bays will go fast enough."

Several moments passed in silence, the bays still leisurely bending to their work, and drawing the light vehicle on toward the top of the giddy hill. The rising breeze, wet and cold, blowing more steadily, told them they were nearing the summit of the black mountain.

Fairleigh Somerville turned uneasily in his seat, disarranging as he did so the wrappings spread over their laps, which he immediately busied himself to rearrange. He peered around him, to the right and to the left, in front and behind, and he spoke often to his horses.

All at once the young man turned to his fair charge, and said, in a low, insinuating voice:

"Pardon me, Miss Grace, pardon me; I would like to say just one word or so to you now. Can I speak, Miss Grace?" and he thrust his face insinuatingly, impudently, close to hers.

The maiden drew her veil, now wet and limp with the searching mist, closer around her face, and shrunk still further away. She trembled in every limb for a moment, but by an effort recovered herself.

"I cannot say nay, Mr. Somerville; but can you talk and drive with sufficient care, too?"

She evidently wished to avoid hearing what he had to say—to throw him off his guard. But Somerville, now that he had broken the ice, would not turn back. He still leaned toward her, and peered straight at her.

"Yes, Miss Grace, I can do both; the horses are safe; they know the road as well by night as by day, and, pardon me, Miss Grace, it does not take long to say—that, as of old, despite your frowns and your every mark of discouragement, I love you still!"

The girl started, as a wild shudder crept over her frame, and cowering in her seat, she said not a word.

"I have never ceased to love you, Grace, since the moment I saw you on your return to your native city; and," continued the young man, with increasing fervor, "my love grows stronger as the days, weeks and months roll by. This, though a strange opportunity, yet is a fitting one for me to tell you this. I have waited patiently for some bright sign to come from you, Grace—waited these two long years of sorrow to me—patiently. I have endeavored to show you by my devotion, and by every other means in my power, that you still were very dear to me. Your father's consent I have already obtained."

Grace Harley writhed in her seat, and, do what she could, a half-groan burst from her.

Fairleigh Somerville heeded neither; he was now trembling with pent-up emotion, of whatever nature it was.

"His consent has long since been given me, and now, Grace, yours only is wanting. I am rich and young; I again tender you my wealth, a strong right arm as a defense, a loving breast for a pillow to you. Tell me, Grace, if you cannot love me in return, or give me some slight token whereby I may be encouraged to hope for your final consent."

Still Grace Harley answered not, and as the young man paused, she turned as if to leap from the vehicle. But she controlled this impulse, and in a calm tone spoke:

"You are right, Mr. Somerville, in saying that this place, after all, is fit for what you have spoken. Please consider it an equally suitable spot for saying what I shall, in reply. As before, I appreciate the offering you have laid at my feet, but, as before, I cannot accept it. Though time has rolled by, it has brought no change in my views on the subject of which you have just spoken. I do not love you, Mr. Somerville, and must beg, now, that this be my final answer."

"And you love another, I suppose, miss?" asked the man, suddenly and rudely.

The girl answered promptly:

"I did not say it, Mr. Somerville, and I cannot answer such questions. Let us drive on home."

"You still love the memory of that contemptible wayside beggar; but he cares not for you; he has gone—forever!"

"Sir!" exclaimed the girl. "I am under your escort, Mr. Somerville, and I trust to you to conduct me home to my father."

"Pardon me, Miss Harley, if I seemed rude," said the young man, after a slight pause; "my emotions got the better of me; and—Ah! here we are at last at the top."

Sure enough, showing dimly under the carriage, and a few yards in front of them, lay two

roads, indicating that they had reached the summit of the mountain. One of the roads ran along for a short distance, on the top of the dizzy ridge, and then, gradually, it drew behind the summit of the great hill. The other skirted along the very edge of the precipitous height itself, overlooking the Monongahela, at least fifteen hundred feet below. This was known as the Mount Washington Road, and, at all times, even in the day, is considered a giddy and a breakneck drive—the road, in many places, crumbling into the very chasm, and hardly wide enough for a carriage to pass without risk of rolling over the ledge.

For a moment young Somerville hesitated, and then coolly turned his horses' heads and drew them into the last-mentioned road, overhanging the dark river far beneath. At the same time he struck the spirited steeds viciously with his whip. In an instant they darted forward, and the light carriage spun along the lofty edge, its wheels dislodging the earth, on the dizzy brink of the beetling cliff.

"Good heavens, Mr. Somerville!" exclaimed the girl in terror; "you are surely not going to try the dangers of this road on such a night? Oh! do—do stop—do stop—and let me get out!" and she clung to his arm.

"Do not embarrass my movements, Miss Harley," returned the man, in a harsh, cold tone, "or you'll have both of our necks broken in a very few moments."

And the steeds still dashed on—the light vehicle rolling and jerking under the impetus, in fearful proximity to the ledge.

"Oh! I beseech you, Mr. Somerville, turn back—turn back!"

"Turn back? Why, Miss Harley, have your senses forsaken you? It would be sure death to attempt to turn back now, and I can scarcely hold the horses. Be steady! be steady! All depends on the sure-footedness of the horses, now."

His tone was very serious, and Grace felt him tremble. On they dashed, and now the narrowest part of the road was reached—the loftiest and dizziest, too. Fairleigh Somerville glanced quickly around him, in every direction, and then exclaimed, in a loud voice:

"Halloo, there!"

Before the echo of his words had died away, suddenly two brawny men started, as it were, from the very shade of the roadside, and sprung toward the vehicle. One seized the reins, and pulled down the champing horses; the other dashed for the carriage. Somerville sprang to his feet and raised his whip, but at that moment was hurled out heavily to the road. The horses took fright, and bursting from the man who stood by their head, darted off at a fearful pace along the giddy path.

Grace Harley had sunk back, fainting, in the buggy. Suddenly a tall, sinewy figure stood in the way of the flying horses, and an arm of iron and a grip of steel were fastened on the bridle by the head, as the horses' feet were raised almost over the fearful chasm.

The struggle was desperate between that stalwart man and the maddened steeds, and the earth crumbled beneath his feet, and rolled down the mountain-side, under his efforts. But he gradually pressed the smoking animals back—back; and then he dashed to the side of the carriage.

"Thank God, Miss Grace, that you are saved!" he exclaimed, in a deep, laboring breath.

Before he could assist her to alight, he was struck a fierce blow on the temple, and sunk tumbling to his knees.

"That for you, Tom Worth! you intruding scoundrel!"

When the brave man had recovered his senses, the carriage and all had disappeared—not a trace was left behind.

The man slowly rose to his feet and glanced about him, and then, without any word, took his way as swiftly as he could down the Mount Washington Road.

CHAPTER V.

THE DAY AFTER.

LATE that night, the one of startling adventure on the dizzy height of the Mount Washington Road—later by far it seemed than there was any necessity to be, judging from the distance to be traversed—an open buggy, drawn by two dashing steeds, after clearing the long stretch of the Suspension Bridge, whirled rapidly up Federal street, in Alleghany City, clattered around into Stockton avenue, and drew up in front of the elegant mansion of Mr. Richard Harley, the retired iron-merchant.

Despite the lateness of the hour, however, lights were still gleaming in the hallway, through the transom over the door, and were shining here and there through the large house.

The driver of the buggy paused a moment and glanced around him. He was alone in the vehicle, and he laughed low as he noted the glancing lights in the hall and house.

"Too bad! too bad!" he muttered, "to come back with such news! And yet it will not seriously hurt him! Time flies; I am sleepy; and now I must break the tidings! Here goes!"

As he spoke, he cast the reins loosely over the

dashboard, and left the panting horses to take care of themselves.

Assuming a shambling, uncertain gait, as if he was hurt, the man walked up the graveled way, and pulled furiously on the bell. Almost in an instant the door was opened by old Mr. Harley himself—terror and anxiety on his face.

"Ah! Mr. Somerville! So glad you have come! And Grace—Grace! She is not with you! Why stayed you so late? and we were so anxious, and why—what is this? what is this, Mr. Somerville? You hurt, and where—where is Grace?—speak, sir! speak at once!" and the old man advanced threateningly toward him.

But Fairleigh Somerville, pushing rudely by the old man, who now stood with starting eyes and clasped hands, sunk as if exhausted into a chair, and groaned aloud.

"Wait—wait, sir, but a moment!" interrupted the young man, speaking in a labored voice. "Wait until I can speak, and I will tell you all!"

"Yes, tell me all, Fairleigh Somerville!" said the old man, in a stern voice; "and mark you well—if you have harmed my child, a father's vengeance will not spare you!"

The old man's frame quivered as these words, hot and earnest, fell distinctly from his lips.

Young Somerville half sprang to his feet, forgetting his hurt, and pain; but, almost instantly, he sunk down, groaning and muttering.

"You need not menace me, Mr. Harley," he said, slowly, "and I am not now in a condition to reply properly to your insinuations—nay, your downright unjust charge. I am hurt—badly hurt, in defense, too, of your daughter!"

He paused as if for breath.

"Oh, God! Mr. Somerville; forgive me! I know not what I am saying; but haste—haste and tell me of my daughter! My heart is bursting—and she—she is my all!"

Still Somerville spoke not; and could the wretched old father have seen the half-demoniacal smile—not of triumph exactly, but demoniac, nevertheless—that flitted over the face and curled the mouth of the young man, his hand had not spared him.

"Be seated, Mr. Harley, and send the domestics away," at length said Somerville, in a low tone, looking up, and motioning the old man to a seat.

At a sign from the master, who at the same time sunk languidly into a chair, the several white-faced, frightened servants left the hallway.

"Listen, Mr. Harley," began the young man, "and do not interrupt me. I must hurry through and hasten home, for I am sadly in need of surgical aid."

"Go on, Mr. Somerville," said the old father, huskily.

"We—Miss Grace and myself—took a long and pleasant drive along the new way recently cut behind Mount Washington. The rain continuing, and your daughter expressing a desire to return, I turned my horses around, and set out homeward again. Whether it was owing to the lateness of the hour, the gloom hanging over everything, or to the newness of the road to me, inadvertently, at all events, I took the wrong road, and—"

"Is this true, Mr. Somerville—true before God and man?" and the old man looked straight in the other's eyes.

Somerville hesitated, and this time he did half quail, and his eyes wandered nervously away from the fixed gaze of the other. Then a red flush passed over his face, and he replied, very sternly and angrily:

"You are an old man, Mr. Harley, and have much to excuse you; but, sir, I cannot listen longer to your innuendoes and insults."

"Excuse me—forgive me, Mr. Somerville! I am almost crazy! Say on! say on!"

"Well, sir—and no more such unpleasant interruptions, if you please—I at last managed to find my way back to the main road, and at length reached the top of the mountain. I then entered the ledge-road."

"The ledge-road! and on such a night! Why, sir—"

"Hear me through, or not at all, sir! I entered that road, because I could not prevent it. My horses had already pulled into it, and I dared not think of attempting to turn round then. Indeed, it was impossible to do so, as you know, sir."

The old man impetuously nodded his head.

"Well, sir," resumed Somerville, "we had proceeded safely on our way, for a quarter of a mile, when, reaching that portion of the road which overhangs the deepest chasm on the way, and which is unprotected by fence or wall, suddenly two villains dashed out from the roadside. In an instant I was hurled from my carriage, and to the earth by a murderous blow! I saw one of the men rush for Miss Grace; then the horses took fright, and darted away for the cliff."

"At that moment a man suddenly sprang from the gloom by the roadside and gripped the horses by the reins. I saw him bear them back, inch by inch, and then, just as my senses for-

sook me, I saw him by the carriage. How long, insensible, I lay there, I can only now tell, for the hour is late. But, when I recovered my senses, I found my horses tied securely to the stock of an old tree, by the wayside; but of the villains or the man who had borne the horses back from the precipice, and of Miss Grace, I could see nothing!"

We will not attempt to portray the anguish of the stricken father; nor the wretchedness that prevailed that night in the Harley mansion.

The next day the papers were filled with accounts of the terrible outrage. After detailing, in the usual high-flown language, the enormity of the crime, they went on to speak of the man who had so opportunely arrested the flying steeds. He had indeed become a hero, for the daily journals referred to him, and one concluded its article thus:

"The name of the gallant fellow, who, by a superhuman effort, forced back the fiery steeds, and saved Miss Harley, daughter of our esteemed citizen, Richard Harley, Esq., of Alleghany City—saved her, alas! it may be for a worse fate—has been found out to be Tom Worth. The man is a common laborer, in the Black Diamond coal mine; and though his name and calling be humble, yet it should not be forgotten by a generous public and those who recognize and love true heroism!"

CHAPTER VI.

OLD BEN, THE MINER.

OLD Ben Walford, the veteran miner, walked slowly up and down the limits of his little cabin, nestled on the verge of the Coal Hills.

It was late at night, and a single lamp alone illumined the darkness of the small apartment. The old man paused occasionally in his promenade to listen to the wind, which sighed and sung so mournfully around the corners, and under the eaves of his little cabin. But, shaking his head, he again resumed his walk; he had heard no welcoming step outside, crunching along toward his lonely little tenement, and was getting impatient and anxious.

Old Ben, the miner, as he was generally known, was a "character" around Pittsburgh—or, rather, in his little circumscribed world there. Almost everybody knew him, and all who did know him respected him for his worth, independence and real nobleness of character. In the working of a mine, in any particular, whether in sinking a shaft, or making a level, or indicating the rise and dip of a coal "drift," the old man's judgment was sought and heeded; for his opinions were based on a quarter century's experience in the far-away celebrated Cornish mines, and his decisions were, in every instance, sound and trustworthy. Yet, in giving his "opinions," he was unpretentious and simple as one of the little "rolley-boys" of the mine.

Although so many knew Ben, and knew him so well, yet, strange as it may appear, they indeed knew very little of him. He did not have many acquaintances—that is of his own choosing and making, and he cared only for a very few friends. Among these friends was one who has been mentioned in this veracious story—Tom Worth, the young miner, who, it seemed, worked day by day along with Ben in the Black Diamond mines, lying next to the Great Alleghany shafts.

These two men, one over a half-century in years, the other little past one-third so old, were very intimate, though they differed so much in personal appearance and attributes, and in almost every other particular save in lofty and powerful physique. How true they were to one another—how devoted and disinterested their friendship, will be seen in the course of this romance.

The two men were strangers to each other—the younger having just entered the mine as a laborer—when, on a certain day, as one of them was lighting a fuse for blasting away some obstruction in the shaft, about midway down, the light by some means was applied too soon. The explosion was imminent, and the bucket, which hung near, was too small to convey both men at once away.

The two strong men shuddered, as they saw certain death staring them in the face, for it was certain death to abide the springing of the powder-charge; and they stood in mute despair, gazing at the fuse, burning nearer, nearer to the fatal fulminate.

"Go, Tom!" said the old man, in a low voice, pointing to the bucket. "Go! I am old, and my days are almost over, anyway! You are young and can be happy! Go!"

Thus spoke the old miner.

"No, Ben, no! Into the bucket with you! You are old and shall die in peace! I am already old in the world's misery, with not a living soul to miss me when I am gone. Go, go, Ben! and think of me once, when I am dead!"

So spoke the younger man.

"Never!" returned old Ben, and the fuse now flashing and scintillating, and the terrible powder only three inches away from the greedy, creeping fire.

"Nay, but by heavens! you shall, old man!" and with a bound the young man sprang forward, clutched the old man by the waist, and,

with a giant's strength, landed him safe into the bucket, giving the signal at the same time to those above to hoist away!

As the bucket shot rapidly upward toward daylight and safety, the young man, deep down in the black shaft, bowed his head and waited.

Then came the deafening shock, and the earth itself seemed to quake.

Ten minutes of awful silence, and then the bucket was slowly lowered again; in it, like an iron man, sat old Ben Walford—his eyes staring down far below him, in the smoke and gloom, his brawny neck pulsating under the heavy strokes of the arteries beating in it.

Down, down! The old man could not go fast enough; and now the place has been reached; and, yes, God be thanked! what joy rioted in the old man's bosom then!

There, under an artificial arch of stone, made by the powerful blast itself, crouched the powder-scorched and grimy man, Tom Worth—the noble! untouched, unharmed, safe!

And there, in the darkness of that black shaft—there in the terrible solitude, in that deep pit in the earth—the old Cornish miner drew the young man to his bosom, and in a scarcely audible, husky voice, murmured:

"THANK GOD!"

Such was the tale the miners would tell you—with an almost reverential manner—of the great friendship between Ben, the old Cornwall miner, and Tom Worth.

Still old Ben paced up and down the narrow confines of his snug little cabin—occasionally waiting by the door, and listening, as if for some welcome sound to reach his ears.

Ben Walford, the miner, was verging onto sixty-two years of age, and yet we would not think so old, judging from the vigorous growth of iron-gray hair that clustered on his broad, furrowed forehead, and fell in unrestrained masses upon his neck. Much less would we judge him so, from the magnificent muscle and brawn of that erect, towering, athletic figure. Yet old Ben said so himself, and there was no denying it.

And this evening the soot and grime of the mine were washed away, showing a remarkably fine face—at once indicative of firmness, honesty, candor, courage and gentleness. A fine-looking, good-looking, hearty old man was Ben Walford, the miner.

He suddenly paused again, and stepping to the door, opened it and peered out into the darkness for several minutes. Then he closed the door again, shutting the cold, disagreeable air out from his warm cabin.

"Confound it!" he muttered. "Strange that boy don't come! I haven't seen his dear face since yesterday morning in the west gallery. Has he come to harm in the pit?—has he—no, no, for he left the mine at four o'clock in the afternoon—so the overseer told me. And then last night, all night long, I waited for him, and kept his supper hot for him, and he didn't come! Nor to-day! What can be the matter? And there, on the fire now, is his supper, waiting for him to come and eat it!"

"There's something strange about Tom Worth," and the old man sunk his voice even lower than usual. "Something that is very queer, and he has never told it to me! Is he afraid to trust his secret with old Ben? No, no! He's an honest boy—a good boy, and if he wishes to say nothing to me, why, of course it's all right, and—Ha! here he is, at last!" and the old man bounded to the door and let down the latch, as a heavy step echoed harsh and loud along the narrow, flinty mountain path, alongside of which the cabin was perched.

In a moment there came a loud rap at the door. The old man paused and started back.

"Very strange!" he muttered. "Come in, Tom, my boy," he continued, opening the door. "What do you mean by rapping at—Ah! Is it you, Mr. Somerville? Come in, sir, and tell me how I can serve you," and the old man's face wrinkled into a dark frown, as the hawk-like, saturnine features of Fairleigh Somerville slowly emerged from the gloom, and showed in the dim light of the miner's solitary lamp.

CHAPTER VII.

AN UNWELCOME VISITOR.

A HEAVY, vindictive frown sat likewise on the face of the young millionaire, and a dare-devil, independent look glanced from his eyes, as he unhesitatingly entered the room, and glared quickly around him.

He unbuttoned his overcoat, shook from it the heavy, cold mist, and removing his cap from his close-cut hair, struck it several times over his knee to get the moisture from it.

The old miner glanced at him suspiciously, but fearlessly, and a still darker and more ominous frown came over his scarred face as he noticed the cool, overbearing deportment of this strange visitor.

"Well, sir," he said, boldly but respectfully, "if it suits you to speak now, please say on, and tell me what brings you here. I am at your service, sir, but you need not be told, Mr. Somerville, that a miner's time is precious, and sleep very grateful after twelve hours spent two hun-

dred feet below the ground in a bad, unwholesome air."

As he spoke, the old miner seated himself rather impatiently opposite his visitor.

"In my own good time, Ben Walford—in my own good time! I am not used to being hurried," replied Somerville, with the utmost *sang froid*, coolly stretching his limbs—which, by the by, seemed to have recovered entirely from his hurts of the night before.

Old Ben's heavy right hand contracted fearfully as he half-rose from his chair; but he controlled himself, and quietly sat down again.

It was not the sight of a heavy revolver protruding from young Somerville's overcoat pocket that deterred the old man; he simply obeyed the better teachings of his nature.

"Very good, Mr. Somerville," he said, quietly; "take your own time; if I wished to hurry you, you know the reason. But please remember," and the old man's voice grew stern, "that Fairleigh Somerville and Ben the miner are not over-warm friends! I cannot forget, sir, how you endeavored to injure me by trying to have me discharged from the 'Black Diamond'—simply, too, because you could not bribe me into the 'Great Alleghany!'"

"Enough, enough, old man! That is past and gone, and let it be kept out of sight! I come on other business."

"Then out with it, sir, and remember this is my cabin, my home, and that, living in a free country, I am a freeman—one at all times ready to defend life and character!"

The old man looked at the other unflinchingly and menacingly as he spoke.

"Tut! tut! old man; you are on a 'high-horse' without a cause," said Somerville; "I come on business, I tell you—to make some inquiries of you, not to quarrel with you." He straightened up in his seat, and faced the other more respectfully.

"As I said before, very good, sir," answered Ben; "time is precious with me, for it is worth more to me than money—it is health."

"Ha! I did not know that you were a philosopher, as well as a miner, Ben Walford; but," he changed his tone, as he saw the ruddy flush of anger spreading over the insulted old man's face, "I am here, on this miserable, nasty night, on business—that business with your room-mate," and he looked straight at the other.

"My room-mate?"

"Yes. Does not Tom Worth live here with you?"

"He does. I am expecting him now every minute, and thought a bit ago that your footstep was his. What do you want with Tom Worth, Mr. Somerville? He's an honest man, and he'll not be bribed in the 'Great Alleghany,' if that's what you come for, I can tell you!"

"Blast the 'Great Alleghany' and Tom Worth, too!" exclaimed Somerville, angrily.

"I'd advise you," said Ben, in a low but distinct voice, "not to let Tom Worth hear you say such of him; and I tell you again, sir, this is my cabin."

Fairleigh Somerville saw that he was going too far. So with a light laugh he said, apologetically:

"A slip-of-the-tongue, that meant nothing, Ben. But time flies. Have you heard that Tom Worth saved Miss Grace Harley from death last night?"

"Yes, sir; I read it in the papers. Tom is the man to do that thing. He has nerve and muscle; but the papers said the horses were yours, Mr. Somerville! Where were you, and what were you doing on the mountain at that time of night and in such weather?"

"By Heaven, you're bold and impudent, old man! What business is that to you? And Tom Worth, if he tells the truth—"

"He never lies!" fairly hissed the old man.

"Well, then, he'll tell you that I was knocked down, senseless, by one of the ruffians. But to business: I believe Tom Worth to be the third villain, and that he has abducted Miss Harley!"

Old Ben Walford sprung to his feet, his eyes fairly flashing fire.

"Heed well your words, Fairleigh Somerville! In matters of this sort, Tom Worth is Ben Walford, and what you say of him I will take to myself! Tom Worth is an honest man, if one walks on God's green earth. And—I am bold to say it—perhaps you know something of this affair, more than Tom, save that he acted the part of a man!"

In an instant Somerville sprung to his feet, and his hand fell on the butt of his pistol, his face half-livid, half-pale, yet working and writhing with passion. But he was not too quick for old Ben Walford. The latter had kept his eye, as he spoke, upon his visitor, and as he saw the other grasp his pistol, he suddenly drew from his bosom a pistol, likewise, and covered the young man's breast with its black muzzle.

"Let go your pistol, Fairleigh Somerville," he said, in a low, determined voice, keenly watching the other the while, "or my finger will pull the trigger!"

Somerville slowly removed his hand, and his face, as he did so, was as white as a gravestone. He rose to his feet.

"I came to see this young man," he said, in a tremulous voice, though his eyes glared like

those of a buffalo-tiger, "and learn from him, which it were not difficult to do—for innocence needs no defense—if the part he played in this affair was simply the heroic! If it was, I intended to reward him myself, that was all."

"And I tell you, sir," replied the old man, slowly putting his pistol away, "take your lesson to yourself, and learn this, that Tom Worth accepts no money but that for which he works and gains honestly. That is more than many can say!"

You speak bravely, old man," said Somerville, a little tartly, now that the pistol was removed; "and I'll say to you that this matter shall not drop here; I will see if this fellow was implicated in that affair. I'll spend every dollar I have, if needed, in the effort, and if he is guilty he shall be punished! Do you understand that?"

"Yes, and I laugh at you! Tom Worth's character, thank God! is not in your hands. And now, sir, you had better leave this cabin, else—I am in earnest, sir!—you'll come to grief!" The old man now spoke very sternly.

Without a word, Somerville turned away. As he did so he glanced at a photograph, hanging in a common gilded frame, on the rude wall.

This photograph represented an elegant-looking young fellow, clad in rich attire, with a high, broad brow, clustering auburn ringlets, a heavy yellow mustache, and large blue eyes.

Somerville started violently and paused at the sight of that photograph.

"Who is that?" he asked, in a low voice, still gazing at the picture.

"That? Why, it's Tom Worth," said old Ben, "taken five years ago, when he had money, though he was none the more honest then than now, when he is rough and dirty."

Without another word, Somerville left the house and strode away at a rapid pace.

"Hells and furies!" he muttered. "I've seen his face before! Now, he must shoulder the blame! I will crush him, else—"

The rest of this sentence was lost, as he hurried away down the hill. On his way he passed a tall, athletic man, striding rapidly up; but Somerville paid no heed to him. In five minutes afterward this same tall man entered the cabin on the mountain.

"Thank God, Tom, that you are here at last!" said old Ben, the miner, as the door closed.

CHAPTER VIII.

LORDLY WEALTH AND HONEST POVERTY.

DESPITE the fact that the old miner had told Fairleigh Somerville that his time was precious to him, yet it was nearly twelve o'clock that night before he rose from his chair, opposite Tom Worth, who sat on the other side of the open, glowing grate, and said:

"That man Somerville is a rascal, Tom; but now we'll go to bed; 'tis late."

In a few moments the light was extinguished, and there was silence in the miner's cabin.

The conversation that night between Tom Worth and his friend, old Ben Walford, was a long one—an earnest one.

More than once the old miner had uttered an exclamation of surprise, and once, in a lull, he had said:

"I tell you again, Tom, that Somerville is no friend of yours! He has money, too, and if occasion comes, will use it against you! Do you know of any reason why he should have this spite against you?"

"He knows that I am your friend, Ben, and that neither of us would quit our old employers, and go into the 'Great Alleghany.' That is the reason—perhaps."

Tom Worth had said that "perhaps" significantly—in fact, as if he himself did not believe what he was saying; but old Ben did not notice this.

The night passed—the gray dawn came—the heavy mist, and gloom, and darkness were rolling away from the black bosoms of three rivers, uniting three in one.

From the numerous cabins on the mountain-side dark forms were issuing, and already the lofty, narrow ledge-paths of the tall hill were lively with groups of sooty miners hurrying along to their work, to relieve the "night-shift."

From the door of Ben Walford's little cabin Tom Worth and his sturdy old friend had some time since gone out. They were faithful laborers and early risers, and lingered not when the hours of work were upon them.

They took their way rapidly along the murky path, exchanging monosyllabic words of greeting with their fellow-workmen hastening on, like them, to bury themselves the live-long day deep down in the pits, and galleries, and levels of the coal-mines.

Our two friends reached the shaft, and having lit the little lamps attached to their hats, were about to enter the bucket to be lowered away, when the overseer called Tom Worth to him and gave him a letter, telling him it had come to the office late the night before.

The young man took the missive, and drawing to one side, tore it open and read it. As his eyes fell on the hard, smooth page and glanced over the black, business-like characters written thereon, the young man started; but he read on, un-

til he had finished it. Then drawing, respectfully, near the overseer, he said:

"I would like to be excused to-day, Mr. Hayhurst. Mr. Harley wishes to see me, sir."

"Very good, Tom; but be back as soon as you can; you know you missed yesterday." The overseer spoke kindly.

"Yes, sir; but, sir, you can stop my wages for the two days, sir," said Tom.

"Stop your wages! Not a bit of it, my man! Not a bit of it! We all know, Tom," he continued, "of your gallantry of night before last on the mountain, and no man who can do such deeds shall have his pay stopped for any cause." The overseer spoke promptly and decidedly. The men standing around showed their approval in a loud murmur; but old Ben Walford said right out:

"Spoken like a man—as we all know you to be—Mr. Hayhurst! Good-by, Tom," he continued, stepping into the large "cage" after the other men; "we'll expect you soon," and the huge bucket, with a creak and a rattle, disappeared from view.

Tom Worth, now all alone, for the overseer had turned into the coal-breaker, drew out the letter, and by the light still burning from the lamp on his hat, again perused the missive. It was not a long communication, and it read as follows:

"No. — Stockton Avenue, Alleghany City,
Nov. 29, 1859.

"TOM WORTH,

"Laborer at the 'Black Diamond' Mine:—

"I see by the papers that you acted well, and at the risk of your own life, in saving my daughter from certain destruction on the night of the accident on Mount Washington. I would not let such gallantry go unrewarded. So get an excuse from the overseer, and come to see me as early as you can to-morrow. Though nearly distracted over the loss of my child, yet I have reason and gratitude enough left me to be able to thank you fully, and to reward you well.

"(Signed)

RICHARD HARLEY."

There was no condescension shown in this note—not at all—though it did seem as if the better nature was struggling against the conventionalities of society—its rank and position. It will be observed that Mr. Harley did not write "Dear Sir," nor even the colder, more formal "Sir," at the top of his smooth sheet. Nor at the bottom did he say "gratefully," or "truly," or even "respectfully yours," but simply attached his signature.

Mr. Harley wished Tom Worth to understand that, in inviting him to his princely mansion, the rich ex-iron merchant did not compromise his own position in society, nor elevate him, Tom Worth, from his, in the coal-mine.

His idea was to pay the man a sum in golden dollars or crispy bank-notes, and at the same time to learn from him as much as possible in regard to the fate of his daughter, or to draw out from Tom some suggestions as to her fate. That was all, and so Tom Worth fully understood it. He smiled bitterly as he carefully re-folded the letter, pushed aside his long, tawny beard, sooty and soiled, and thrust the missive into his jacket-pocket.

That day, about half-past nine o'clock, a tall man, with auburn hair, and large blue eyes, his face almost entirely covered with a luxuriant mass of yellow beard and whiskers, turned into Stockton avenue, in Alleghany City. The man was clad in rather coarse attire—heavy boots on his feet, a rough overcoat, and pantaloons of cheap though good material.

Pausing before the gate of the Harley mansion, he hesitated for a moment, and then walking up the graveled walk to the door, rung the bell with decided energy. The broad hall within speedily echoed to hasty steps. Then the door was opened, and a man in rich livery stood before him.

"Your business?" he asked, gruffly, scrutinizing the coarse garb of him who had polluted the silver door-knob by his plebeian touch.

"To your master I'll tell it; is he at home?"

The servant's face in an instant reddened.

"I have no master, I can tell you, my fine fellow!" he said. "Mr. Harley is my employer!"

"Tis all one; is he at home?"

"Yes, but—"

"All right; I have a letter from him, requesting me to call. Is he at home for visitors?"

"Yes, sir! Excuse me! Come in," and the servant at once changed his deportment, bowed the man into the house, and then into the gorgeous parlor.

As he entered this apartment, Tom Worth—it was he—started, trembled. Glancing around him quickly, he strode across the room to the opposite wall, on which hung a portrait of Grace Harley—an elegant work of art, portraying the young girl in all her ravishing beauty when seventeen years of age.

For a whole minute the miner stood there, gazing at the picture glowing on the canvas, which seemed as if it might also speak to him. He heeded not the elegance and extravagant show of wealth by which he was surrounded; but gazed into the angelic face suspended above him, and, with clasped hands, murmured:

"Oh, Grace! God be with you in your dark

hour. You shall be saved! Will it be for me to—"

The returning footsteps of the servant warned him that other ears were not far off. He quickly seated himself as the man appeared and said:

"Mr. Harley is now ready to receive you—follow me."

Taking up his coarse hat, the miner strode close behind the servant to the library.

Mr. Harley was standing contentedly before the open grate, his hands behind him. He glanced with a keen scrutiny at his visitor.

Lordly Wealth and honest Poverty stood face to face.

CHAPTER IX.

TOM WORTH'S OPINION.

TOM WORTH stood quietly in that majestic presence; he was not at all abashed, but rather he seemed to draw up his own superb, stalwart form, more loftily.

For a moment the old gentleman gazed upon his visitor; and then, fondling his seals, which dangled in profusion over his richly-clad bosom, he said, as if forgetting himself:

"Be seated, my man—Mr. Worth—I suppose that is your name?"

"Yes, sir; but if your business with me is brief, I prefer to stand," said Tom Worth, glancing with some hauteur at the rich man, who, though he pointed his visitor to a seat, made no sign of taking one himself.

"Ah! excuse me! Please be seated, Mr. Worth. I desire to have a little talk with you," and the rich old gentleman set the example and took a seat himself.

Tom took the proffered chair, retaining his coarse hat between his hands.

"Will you take some refreshments, sir—a little Spanish wine perhaps?" said the rich man, evidently constrained into respect and deference by the deportment of his guest.

"No, sir, thank you," returned the other; "I have breakfasted well."

Mr. Harley started as he heard the words, spoken so courteously—so correctly.

"Your voice sounds strangely familiar to me, Mr. Worth. Have I seen you before?" suddenly asked Mr. Harley.

It was now Tom Worth's time to be startled. For a moment, and a moment only, a flush passed over his face. It was quickly gone.

"No doubt, sir; I have been in Pittsburg for many months, and I have often seen you, sir."

"Yes, yes; and were you born here?" persisted Mr. Harley.

"I was born, not here, but—"

"Where did you come from, then?" asked the old gentleman.

Tom Worth reddened again, and bit his lip, viciously, but the angry gesture was hid beneath the heavy mustache that shaded his mouth, and swept down, far over the hirsute chin.

"Many, many miles from here, Mr. Harley; but, sir, 'tis a long story to tell, and my life is far from being an interesting one. You sent for me to make inquiries concerning your daughter?"

The old man felt the rebuke.

"Thank you!" he said, deeply, and this time, the real man—the father, spoke; "thank you, Mr. Worth, for your reminder. I sent for you to ask you what you knew of that outrageous affair—of the part you took in it, and to show my gratitude to you, for your noble conduct. Alas! alas! my poor, dear child!"

"I sincerely hope all may be well with her, Mr. Harley," said Tom Worth, sympathizingly. He spoke very earnestly, very warmly, and the old man again glanced at him. But Tom Worth had bowed his head low down, his eyes were invisible.

At length he looked up, his face calm and imperturbable.

"As time is precious with me, Mr. Harley—I am a laboring man, you know, sir—I will tell you, in a few words, all I know of this painful affair."

"Yes, Mr. Worth, go on."

"I was detained from going to my cabin, night before last, by certain circumstances, and found myself on the Mount Washington road up on the ledge. I was seated by the roadside when I heard wheels. The vehicle evidently was going at a rapid pace. I looked up. As I did so, I saw two forms dart out from the roadside, and dash for the carriage—an open buggy. One of them clutched the horses by the bridle; the other went straight to the carriage. A lady and gentleman sat in that carriage. A struggle ensued, in which the gentleman either fell from the vehicle, or was hurled from it."

Tom Worth paused as he emphasized "fell;" but continued at once:

"The horses took fright, and broke by the man who stood at their head. I had remained still, until now, scarcely able to realize matters. But suddenly my energies were aroused, and as the frightened horses dashed past me, straight for the brink of the precipice, I sprang forward, caught them by the head-reins, and by severe efforts, succeeded in checking them. Pressing them safely back, and quieting them, I ap-

proached the carriage. The lady was paralyzed with fear, and that lady, sir, was Gr—your daughter. At that moment I was struck senseless. When I recovered my reason—and an hour must have elapsed—I found no one on the road save myself."

He paused.

"Is that all you know, my good man, of this terrible affair?"

Tom Worth did not answer at once. As a shade of anxiety passed over his face, he pondered. Then he answered promptly:

"How could I know more, Mr. Harley? Remember, I had gone down under the blow—that my senses had forsaken me."

"True, true; and, Mr. Worth, what were you doing—did you say?—on the mountain?"

An angry flush passed over Tom Worth's face, but he controlled himself, though he answered very sternly:

"On my own business, sir."

"Ah! exactly," said Mr. Harley, looking foolish.

Several moments elapsed in silence. Tom Worth, glancing around him, rose to go.

"One moment, one moment, Mr. Worth," exclaimed the old gentleman, unwilling to let him go; "have you thought on this subject any—have you formed an opinion?"

And his eyes strained into the other's face, as if endeavoring to gain from it some clew, some hope.

The miner hesitated, while a dark scowl wrinkled his handsome, honest face; but he sat down again.

"It is not for me, a poor man, an humble miner, Mr. Harley, to have any opinion at all in a matter of this sort. I chanced to be on the mountain, and saw what transpired. Had I not been there, of course I would have known nothing of it," was his singular reply.

"All true, Mr. Worth," continued the old man, still hoping as it were against hope—longing for some information, however meager, in regard to the whereabouts of his daughter; "but, sir, you are a man of judgment—you must be, from your courage and nerve. It is hardly possible that you have not an opinion in this matter. Tell me if you have."

Tom Worth pondered again; his face was very serious, and now and then it contracted, as thought after thought crowded through his mind.

"I am a poor man, Mr. Harley, though thus far I am an honest one; but, sir," he said, suddenly, "my word is nothing when money can be brought against it."

"What mean you?" demanded the old gentleman.

"—And my opinion, coming as it would, from a poor man's lips, is simply worth nothing," continued the miner, unheeding the interruption.

"Again, what do you mean?" asked the rich man.

"—Though, for all that, I have my opinion, Mr. Harley," said the miner, finishing his sentence and paying no attention to the old man's questions.

"Well, what is your opinion?" asked Mr. Harley.

"I should have more properly said—suspicions, sir," said Worth, quietly.

"Suspicious! and of what?" asked the old gentleman, starting violently.

"Suspicious, sir, as to the motive prompting this fiendish outrage," and the scowl on Tom Worth's face grew blacker; "likewise as to who committed that glaring crime, right here in the midst of a great city."

And Tom Worth gazed fixedly and unflinchingly into the rich man's face.

Old Mr. Harley sprung to his feet.

"Say you so, say you so, my good man? Make good your suspicions and surmises, and you can command my purse for any amount. And here now, beforehand, for your gallantry on the hill, accept this purse. It contains bank-notes to the amount of five hundred dollars. Take it, sir."

And he thrust the well-filled purse into the miner's hand.

But Tom Worth's fingers did not close over that purse, within which the new bank-notes crisped and crackled; he put it away from him with a motion of disgust, with a firmness so decided that it was almost rude.

"No, sir! my conduct cannot be made marketable, Mr. Harley! I cannot even thank you for the offer, for it is an insult to an honest man's pride and sense of duty."

The old ex-merchant recoiled with amazement, almost speechless with astonishment. Never before had he met such a man!

"What!" he gasped; "not take money, and you so poor, as you, yourself, say!"

"True, sir, I will not take the money, and, though very poor, am still rich enough to refuse your offer."

The old man sat down, almost beside himself with astonishment and incredulity. Recovering, however, from his stupor, he looked up and said:

"Very good, then, Mr. Worth; but, sir, tell me if you please what you suspect in regard to this matter."

"The prompting motive, sir, was a contempt—"

ible one—a dark one—one which you, a rich man, may surmise."

And Tom Worth looked straight at the old man.

"I understand you, sir," said the father, in a slow, labored voice, as the red blood flowed away from his cheeks; "and, my good man, the PERPETRATOR!"

And his voice sunk to a whisper.

"One, sir, of whom you think a great deal—one who has money; none less, sir, than your fr—"

At that moment a loud ring on the bell startled them, and in a second a note was handed in.

The old gentleman took it, opened it half-impatiently as if he disliked the interruption.

As his eyes fell upon the sheet a sudden frown wrinkled his face. He glanced fiercely at Tom Worth, then nervously, anxiously at the clock, and a smile of angry satisfaction swept over his face.

Just then heavy steps echoed on the graveled walk outside, coming from the street, and then the bell rung again.

In a minute more the hall of the rich man's house was filled with men, and old Richard Harley rubbed his hands with joy.

CHAPTER X. INSNARED.

It may be well for us at this point to return briefly to the mountain road that dreary night, which witnessed there the outrage recorded.

When her unknown friend in her hour of greatest danger—and the reader knows that friend, though the maiden did not—had sprung forward and caught the horses, Grace Harley, overcome by terror, swooned and sunk down moaning in the foot of the carriage.

It is true, she did not swoon until, as she thought, her protector had suddenly disappeared.

Grace was awakened by some one dashing water in her face from a cup which had been improvised as a basin.

She shivered and struggled to her feet, but quickly sunk backward on the seat with a groan of terror and a half-shriek of alarm.

She had only time to glance around her, but that glance revealed to her three figures—one standing on each side of the carriage, and the third being erect in the buggy. He it was who held the cup of water and was endeavoring to restore her to consciousness.

In another moment a rough bandage was thrown rudely over her eyes, and then, in an instant, a gag was slipped between her teeth and secured, and her slender wrists were bound viciously together. All this occupied but a moment and before the girl could utter a note of alarm or cry for help.

For a moment a hurried conversation was carried on by her captors in a tone so low and guarded that she heard not a single word, nor even the tones of the men sufficiently distinct for her to recognize them if she should know them.

At the end of this conference the party evidently separated, for the girl heard steps moving away.

Only a few moments elapsed before she recognized the crunching of wheels on the hard road and the rough tones of a man, speaking in a subdued voice to the horse. The vehicle paused by the light carriage. The maiden was at once lifted from the latter, and in an instant a soft cord was passed around her ankles, entirely preventing the use of her limbs, being now literally "bound hand and foot."

Then she was placed inside the vehicle, which, it was plain to her, from its roominess, was an open spring or Jersey wagon. She was laid on the hard bottom of the wagon, and a heavy cloak thrown over her.

Her efforts were vain, and in a kind of half-stupor she lay still, scarcely breathing, praying at the same time to die and be rid of this worse than death. Then she heard a man ascend to the broad board front of the wagon body, which served as a seat; and then another mounted likewise.

In a moment, regardless of the comfort of the tender maiden lying so helpless in the wagon, the driver lashed the horse, and away they rattled at a break-neck pace down the steep mountain road.

At length the wagon came down to a more moderate pace; then it was evident that, at last, they were going down the sharp declivity of the Mount Washington road toward the Smithfield street bridge.

Continuing on for a few minutes the wagon suddenly rolled over hard, smooth, well-worn timbers, and paused.

Then the voice of the toll-keeper sounded strangely familiar on the poor girl's ear, and she, though but a few feet from him, could not appeal to him.

"Where are you bound, Tom?" asked the man, as he was handing the change back to the fellow who drove the horse.

"My name's in everybody's mouth! But I am bound on my own business, and *that's* not yours!" was the rough reply in a harsh voice, as the speaker struck the horse, and the wagon moved on.

Under the flaring gas-lamp this man bore a striking resemblance to Tom Worth.

Once across the bridge, the wagon again rattled on over the pavement of the street. It turned here and there, tore around this corner and climbed that hill, as Grace Harley could easily tell by the swaying and swinging of the vehicle and by the manner in which she was thrown so rudely from side to side.

On and on went the wagon, first into this street, then into that; now going at a rapid pace, now slowly climbing a long, laborious hill, now descending this same hill.

Still no word had been spoken by those grim men who carried the maiden away, a silent, unresisting prisoner.

At length the wagon paused, and one of the men sprung to the ground. In an instant creaking chains were heard and low words spoken to the panting horse. Then the man speedily remounted and struck the animal with the whip. Again the wagon rattled on. Something had broken about the harness.

The vehicle was now going up another long, steep hill. The wheels creaked, and the labored breathing of the horse told that the ascent was heavy.

The air grew fresher, and the wind howled dimly through the open cracks in the wagon, and with its damp breath chilled the maiden through and through.

Louder wailed the wind; colder grew its wet breath. It was plain to the girl that they were approaching some sparsely-settled portion of the city—most probably the top of some one of the big hills surrounding the place, or, it might be, in the country.

The girl shuddered.

Suddenly, with a creak and a groan from the wheels, and a deep, labored pant from the horse, the wagon paused. The men leaped quickly to the ground, lifted the cramped form of the girl from her painful posture, and unbinding her feet, but leaving the blindfold and the gag on, and her wrists secured, bore her from the wagon.

The ominous click of a lock sounded on the air. The girl felt herself borne into a warmer, more genial atmosphere.

She was placed upon her feet. The men retreated and locked the door behind them.

Grace Harley was all alone in that dark, silent room.

CHAPTER XI. THE STROKE.

THE letter which old Richard Harley had received that morning when he talked with Tom Worth, the miner, in his rich library, was brief, but it was startling in import. It ran thus:

"DEAR MR. HARLEY:—

"I write in haste. I learn that you have sent for one Tom Worth, a miner. If you value your daughter's safety, and long for a retributive justice, when he comes, see to it that he does not leave your house before eleven o'clock. In one word, *he* is the villain, after all! I am myself, from certain circumstances recently transpiring, satisfied that *he* planned the abduction of your sweet daughter.

"Again I beg you to keep him until eleven o'clock, when I will arrive, with officers.

"Truly and sympathizingly yours,

"FAIRLEIGH SOMERVILLE."

The reader will now doubtless understand the vengeful glance old Richard Harley had cast at his rough-looking visitor, and will likewise know why the ex-merchant consulted the clock-dial so nervously. For it must be remembered that the interview was at an end, and Tom Worth had risen for the third time to his feet, to go.

When the bell had sounded, and the hall was filled with a body of men, old Mr. Harley sprung to his feet, and facing Tom Worth, exclaimed, as he shook his finger menacingly in his face:

"Wait, villain! you are wanted!"

"What do you mean, sir?" asked the miner, as a scowl passed over his face.

He glanced around him. But he could say no more, nor take a step in any direction, even were he so inclined; for, at that moment, the door of the library was opened, and a squad of police-officers appeared. Among them, in the background, stood Fairleigh Somerville, his face showing a strange admixture of triumph and fear.

Tom Worth's face paled slightly at the sight of the officers, and a flash of appreciation—of a right understanding of the situation of affairs, flitted like lightning over his face. Then there came a quick, angry writhing of that face. This, however, was transitory, and an iron-like composure succeeded it as his gaze sought Fairleigh Somerville's face.

"That is the man, there, my men," said that young gentleman, in a distinct, though rather nervous voice.

"You are my prisoner, Tom Worth!" said one of the officers, advancing at once toward the miner, and laying his hand heavily upon his shoulder. "I arrest you in the name of the Commonwealth!"

"Arrest me! and for what?" demanded the miner, calmly, of the officer.

"For the abduction and forcible detention from her home of Miss Grace Harley," was the prompt reply.

"And upon what grounds, sir? Who is my accuser?"

"On very suspicious grounds, which will be given in evidence, but which cannot be detailed here. Mr. Fairleigh Somerville is your accuser."

And the officer pointed to that individual, who seemed to be endeavoring to shrink away from sight.

The miner glanced at the man, and, while a hot flush passed over his face, said:

"Then Mr. Somerville is a coward and a falsifier, as well as a villain!"

Fairleigh Somerville, as his saturnine visage was suddenly distorted with anger, turned quickly, and striding toward the prisoner, raised a whip which he carried in his hand threateningly over the other's shoulders.

Before the lash descended, however, Tom Worth, with the bound of a lion, sprung forward, shaking off the grasp of the officer. In an instant he had clutched the whip with his left hand, and drawing back his right till the huge muscles of his arm swelled and struggled under his sleeve, he said:

"Dare lay the weight of your smallest finger upon me, you white-livered scoundrel, and I'll throttle you in the very face of the law!"

Trembling in every limb, Somerville let go the whip and retreated hastily behind the police sergeant, who had now stepped forward.

"Enough, enough of this, Tom Worth, or you'll condemn yourself!" said the officer, sternly.

"Away with the villain! Away with him!" exclaimed old Mr. Harley, his face white with passion. "Such impudence in my house!"

"Come, Tom," said the officer, "follow me; give me no trouble, or I'll have to handcuff you!"

An expression of pain passed over the miner's face as he stepped forward obediently by the officer's side.

"Handcuff him? Of course you will!" said Somerville, in a hissing voice. "I demand it!"

"You can demand *nothing* of me, Mr. Somerville," returned the tall policeman, firmly. "The prisoner is in my custody; I am responsible for his safe-keeping, not you. Besides, I know Tom Worth, and am acquainted with his character for honesty and truthfulness. Come, Tom, follow me."

Somerville bit his lips in very rage at the cutting words of the officer, but said nothing.

Tom Worth, shaking with a convulsive shudder, trod close behind the officer—who, beckoning his men to follow him, pushed rudely by old Harley, and Somerville, standing by the door, and left the house.

As they reached a prison-van, which was in waiting, at the street gate, the policeman turned and said:

"Mr. Somerville, you are expected to be at the alderman's office, in Penn street, this afternoon, at four o'clock."

He was about directing Tom to get into the van, when the prisoner asked:

"Will you allow me, sir, to go over to my cabin, to get a few necessary things to serve me in jail?"

"Certainly, my man," replied the officer, promptly, "but I hardly think it will be as bad as that. From what I have heard of you, I am sure you have a friend who will bail you."

"No, sir; I *must* go to jail; I do not wish bail. I will go to jail and await justice; it will come, some day."

The policeman said no more; but when Tom Worth had entered the disreputable van, he entered also, having first directed the driver to go over the river to Tom's cabin, as the prisoner had requested.

The news of Tom Worth's arrest, for the abduction of Miss Grace Harley, spread like wild-fire through Pittsburg. It was duly announced in the afternoon papers, and various were the comments made upon the news. Among Tom's acquaintances, the miners, the excitement was intense. He was widely and well known, not only in his own mine—the Black Diamond—but in many others, among the Coal Hills, and his arrest fell upon them with a stunning force.

It were difficult to tell the effect of these woe-ful tidings on old Ben Walford. When the old man first heard it he was deep down in one of the levels of the mine. A miner who had heard the news at the shaft came by and told him. The old man paused as if shot, and a terrible shudder crept over him.

Before he had recovered himself, and before he could ask any questions, the man had passed on.

There was an iron rigidity about old Ben's face, as, without another word to his wondering companions, the old man turned off. As he pursued his way swiftly through the dark, underground "streets" toward the shaft, he muttered:

"'Tis false! 'tis false! My boy is no scoundrel, and young Somerville *is*. He is at the bottom of this, I know. I'll not doubt my boy—never!"

He reached the shaft, and signaling for the bucket, was soon on the outside world again. The old man at once sought out Mr. Hayhurst, the overseer.

That gentleman had just read the news in the paper and was sitting now, with brooding countenance, gazing vacantly at his feet.

"Bad news, Ben!—that of Tom—and 'tis hard to believe. But, then, it comes straight. You know young Somerville—"

"Is a scoundrel, Mr. Hayhurst!" blurted old Ben, right out.

"Not so loud, Ben, or you may get into trouble."

"I hope, Mr. Hayhurst, you don't believe the story?" said Ben, almost fiercely.

"I don't know *what* to believe, Ben," said Mr. Hayhurst, "but I'll tell you one thing; Tom has always been a good fellow, and he *shall* have justice!"

"Thank you, thank you kindly, Mr. Hayhurst. Yes! he shall have justice!"

"Meet me this afternoon, Ben, at the alderman's office. At all events, I'll see that the poor fellow, guilty or not guilty, does *not* go to jail."

"God bless you, Mr. Hayhurst, for your kind heart! And, depend upon it, I'll be there!"

It may be readily imagined that the alderman's little office was *packed*. It was known all over the city that a preliminary examination of the prisoner would be held there at four o'clock; and as the case, from its very flagrancy, excited much interest and created great indignation, *everybody* seemed anxious to be present and see the man, so humble in life, so well spoken of heretofore, who had been accused as the bold perpetrator of the crime upon law and society.

Hence, long before the hour for the examination, the scene in front of the alderman's office was an animated one. Merchants and miners, ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls—all swelled the crowd—each doing his or her best to perform what was almost an impossibility—to squeeze into the little room, already so full that suffocation of all hands was imminent.

At length the prison van appeared. In a few minutes it forced its way through the crowd and drew up at the alderman's office.

The assembly swayed to and fro, but was suddenly hushed to almost absolute silence, as the prisoner, clad in the same coarse garments in which he had visited the splendid mansion of Richard Harley, Esq., and carrying a bundle under his arm, descended quietly from the van; and, preceded and followed by an officer, entered the office.

As he did so a stentorian voice in the surging crowd shouted aloud:

"I am here, Tom, and will never desert you!"

The poor miner gave a quick, grateful glance around, and saw the powerful form of old Ben Walford performing deeds worthy of Hercules in his mighty endeavors to get closer to him.

And then Tom Worth stood before the alderman.

CHAPTER XII.

THE MEETING IN THE SHINLEY.

OPPOSITE East Common, by Christ Church—the commons and their extensions now known as the Alleghany Parks—and to the right of Nunnery Hill, as you go up Union avenue, is a collection of small, squalid tenement-houses, extending for a considerable distance, and called by the general title of the Shinley Property.

As every city, town and hamlet has a disreputable quarter, so is the Shinley Property the disreputable quarter of Pittsburgh's most charming suburb—Alleghany City. For years this property has borne the name by which it is now known; and in the local annals of Alleghany City it has become quite notorious in many respects, which we need not particularize.

Suffice it to say, that those who *should* know state very emphatically that it were difficult to find a place in any other city of the United States, or of the world, which could, in looseness of life—in the utter depths of infamy—rival the dens and haunts of the wicked and abandoned in the Shinley Property of Alleghany City.

By respectable people there are some parts of this diseased and vice-infected quarter which are shunned, even under the glare of the noonday sun; and after nightfall they would as soon think of wading the Ohio with impunity as to pass through the *purlieus* and lanes of the Shinley Property. In mildest language, it was a *bad* place, and it may perhaps deserve the title that has been bestowed upon it of a *moral fester*.

Be all that as it may, it is into this place we must ask the reader to follow us on the night succeeding the abduction of Grace Harley—the same on which, earlier in the evening, Fairleigh Somerville had visited old Ben, the miner, in his cabin on the mountain.

This night, about an hour after midnight, two men were to be seen picking their way cautiously along the narrow street which lay next to Nunnery Hill. They proceeded but a short distance, when they turned suddenly into a small, dark alley—so narrow that they could not walk abreast singly, but were compelled to go sideways, one after the other. Emerging, however, very soon from the further end of the gloomy passage, they entered a court and approached a flight of rickety stairs, leading, outside, up to the second story staging of a low brick house.

The men rapidly ascended to the staging with-

out looking behind them. In a few moments they were on the staging.

"Make the signal, Teddy," said one of the men, softly.

The man addressed put his hands to his mouth and created a low, flute-like sound or whistle.

A moment only elapsed when, apparently from the remotest depths of the old house, an answer, low and guarded, was returned.

Without waiting, the man called Teddy pushed open the door and entered a dark room beyond, saying:

"'Tis all right, Launce; the boss is here, and we'll get our money. Come!" and both men disappeared within, closing and securing the door behind them.

For a moment they groped around, and finally paused before another door within. On this they gave a peculiar rap. The door was opened at once, and a flood of brilliant light shone forth, illuminating the gloomy depths of the antechamber with a splendor almost startling.

The men at once entered, hat in hand; and then the door closed, as if of its own accord, behind them.

Seated at a table in the comfortable, well-furnished apartment, was a very tall but slender man. A heavy beard of dark hue covered all the lower portion of his face; a slouched hat was drawn well over his eyes, obscuring the upper portion of his face. An overcoat of thick stuff clung loosely around his person, and reached to his feet.

The man's hands were gloved, and over his left shoulder, on the back, was an immense, disfiguring hump.

He was, as the reader well knows, the same mysterious person whom we have seen on a previous occasion, in the old house, on Boyd's Hill, though, if the truth be told, not much of a hump could *then* be seen—certainly not enough to be noticeable.

In front of the man was a large cut-glass decanter and several costly goblets. The odor coming from the unstopped decanter proclaimed it to be brandy. To his right hand lay a heavy revolving pistol, and by it a large portemonnaie.

The man laid down a pencil and pushed aside a scrap of paper, as the two men entered. He had evidently been making notes.

"Here at last, are you?" he exclaimed, in a half-surlly manner.

"We are ahead of time, Mr.—boss," said the man, Teddy, suddenly, as he saw a quick sign of warning from the other.

"Yes, and you always are when you expect money, but not when I want you," continued the man seated by the table, as if determined to find fault.

One of the men seemed inclined to retort, but a glance from his companion restrained him.

"We need money very much, boss, for we have children, you know. Besides, that, we—"

"Confound your children, and you, too! Don't prate to me about them!"

An angry flush flew over the man's dark face, and he dug his nails into the palms of his hands; but he kept back the fierce reply that had already sprung to his lips. And then he said very quietly, almost gently:

"Yes, yes, boss; but our little ones are very dear to us, and we, though rough and *unfortunate* men, hate mightily to hear the little things cry for bread."

Was it that the brute in the long overcoat was softened, that he glanced at the man quickly? or was it that he noticed the poor fellow's emphasis? At all events, he did not pursue the subject further, but contented himself with saying, simply:

"Bah!"

Till this time the men had been standing; but at a sign from him who was evidently their master—in the strongest sense of that word—they seated themselves on a sofa near the table.

Several moments passed in silence—the man who sat by the table paying no heed to the common-looking fellows on the sofa, but looking up at the ceiling and pulling meditatively at his long whiskers. At length, however, he glanced down and said, as if all at once wide-awake:

"Come, Launce; come, you and Teddy, and take a drink—something good. It will warm you up this raw night, and do you no harm," and he drew the decanter near to him, and poured out a large draught in each of the two tumblers.

The man named Launce came at once and approached the table, but the other hesitated and kept his seat.

"Why don't you come, Teddy? I know you love liquor. Ah! You think I will poison you! Ha! ha! No, indeed! I cannot spare you yet, Teddy, and I would not poison you in such good stuff as this! Come, man; here, pour out for yourself, and I will drink the four ounces already in the goblet as a guaranty of good faith."

So saying, he took the glass and tossed off the burning liquor at a gulp, and without a grimace, down his throat.

Teddy waited no longer; he arose at once, and pouring out a large drink, drank it at a swallow, saying at the same time:

"No, no, boss; I wasn't afraid to trust you; but you see, I can't stand much liquor."

"All right," replied the other; "but the less you take the less you can bear," and the tall man laughed, as if he had said something witty. "But now to business!" he continued. "Sit down and tell me what you have heard to-day."

"We have both heard *news*," replied the man Teddy, his face brightening, as the strong brandy darted through his frame.

"And what is it, Teddy?"

"Why, sir, it's all over Alleghany and Pittsburg, too, that old Harley's daughter has been taken off somewhere and by somebody. But nobody knows much about it."

"You don't say so! This is news! And who was the *somebody*?—did you hear?"

"Why, sir, 'tis not positive, you know; but, sir, they all say it was a fellow called Tom Worth, a miner in the Black Diamond."

"Glorious!" exclaimed the other. "And so Tom Worth did this daring deed?"

"Yes, sir; so 'tis said; and everybody believes it."

"Yes, Teddy, and 'tis very well that everybody *should* believe it," said the master, significantly, "and you and Launce *know why*."

"Of course we do; and you needn't tell us," said the man, somewhat suddenly and rudely. The brandy had evidently crazed him.

The man in the long overcoat reached out his hand suddenly, and grasped his pistol.

"None of your impudence, Teddy," he said, in a deep, stern voice, "or, by heavens, I'll shoot you through the head!"

"Shoot me, would you? Shoot, I say! That's better than to be living the dog's life I now lead! And I such a slave to you, on account of a single cart-load of coal I stole from the mine—stole it to keep my poor wife warm—stole it to keep life and soul together in my dying child! Shoot, shoot! but remember I am ready!" and he drew a pistol from his bosom. "And the day may be near at hand when *your* crimes—"

He did not finish the sentence, for the tall man, suddenly springing over the table, felled him to the floor at one blow with the butt of his pistol. And then, glaring like a tiger, he stood over his fallen foe.

The man called Launce drew near.

"Do not kill him, boss; he is drunk, and he has a wife and children. And, boss, he is of service to you. I'll sober him!"

As he spoke he dragged the man into the adjoining room. Coming back, he filled a bucket with cold water, and returning drenched the senseless wretch with dash after dash of the chilling bath.

The man shivered, recovered his senses, arose to his feet, and staggering back into the room, fell on his knees before him who had punished him, and said, humbly:

"Pardon me, boss—forgive me! Liquor crazes me. I will still serve you."

"'Tis well, Teddy. And I will trust you; but, mark me well, *do not tempt me again*. I'll keep your pistol. Now, here, take your money; and you, too, Launce, and be off! You will find fifty dollars in each roll. 'Tis good pay, but the job was well done, and I am not stingy. Now begone, for 'tis very late!"

The men received their money, and turned toward the door. As the light fell on the man's face—the one called Launce—there he stood! *Tom Worth, the miner, over and over again: the very embodiment in the flesh!*

But in a moment the men were gone; and the old staircase was creaking under their heavy boots.

CHAPTER XIII.

IN THE DOCK.

THERE was a breathless silence in the little office of Alderman March among those who had gathered there to witness the preliminary trial of Tom Worth, the miner, as the officer led the prisoner straight through the crowd, until he stood directly in front of the legal functionary.

The alderman did not hesitate a moment; he cast a glance at the tall, splendid form of the prisoner, who stood so boldly, yet so deferentially before him. Then he looked away.

It was difficult to read that glance of the alderman. And even in this humble "limb of the law" there were those watching for signs of evil or good intent—of a prejudiced mind, or of an open, honest judgment, according to the evidence and the law.

Old Ben Walford was one of those who thus scrutinized the almost impassible face of the alderman, and he saw that the glance to which we have referred was kindly, and the old man knew that the alderman, in his heart, sympathized with the prisoner. And the old man was glad.

"What is your name, my man?" the alderman asked, in a kind tone, of the prisoner.

Casting his eyes aloft for a moment, as if thinking away back in the past, while a bitter smile lifted his mustached lip, he said:

"My name, your Honor! Why, *everybody* should know it now! It is *Tom Worth*, your Honor; heretofore a name reckoned honest."

"And honest now, my boy, or there's not one in Pittsburg!" exclaimed old Ben, who, by prodigies of wriggling, herculean feats of strength, and considerable display of strategy, had worked his way close behind his unfortunate friend.

The alderman's face was, for a moment, wrin-

kled with a frown of displeasure, but it quickly cleared up. Leaning over his desk he said, in a mild, though decided tone:

"Make no further interruptions here, or you shall be removed from the room."

And he shook his finger half-threateningly, half-warningly, at the bold speaker.

"I beg ten thousand pardons, your Honor. I couldn't help it, sir, for—well, sir, I'll not again offend your Honor. Only, sir, let me stay near my poor boy, there."

The old man spoke so honestly, so entirely from the depths of his great heart, that the alderman, simply making a sign of assent, bent his head very closely over the transcript before him again.

And in that "boy's" eye, in a moment, there stood unbidden one large salt tear.

A most impressive silence followed this little episode.

The alderman looked up again and, addressing the prisoner, said:

"I shall propound to you a few questions, Tom Worth, to which you may or may not answer, as it suits you. I am but doing my duty when I tell you to answer nothing when that answer may criminate you."

"Thank you, your Honor; I appreciate your kindness, sir," said the prisoner.

"Do you swear or affirm?"

"Swear, sir," was the prompt reply.

The alderman took a Testament from the table and held it toward him.

"Take off your hat, prisoner, and place your right hand upon this book."

"Surely, your Honor," suddenly and rudely exclaimed young Somerville, pushing forward, "surely, sir, you are not intending to allow a prisoner to testify in his own behalf?"

"Be silent, sir!" said the alderman, sternly. "I am the judge of my own conduct, and shall interpret the law myself."

With a withering look, and not condescending to say another word, the alderman turned from Somerville and administered the required oath to the prisoner.

There was a disposition to applaud this action among those assembled there, for, do what they could, and as prejudiced as many were against the prisoner, they were compelled to admire that lofty, athletic form—that splendid, labor-tanned face of the miner.

But the alderman quickly stopped any such demonstration.

Fairleigh Somerville glanced covertly and viciously around the crowd, and bit nervously at the coarse ends of his swarthy mustache.

"Now, prisoner, please answer as I ask. Where do you work, my man?"

"In the 'Black Diamond' coal mine, your Honor," was the prompt response.

"How long have you worked there?"

"Sixteen months, sir."

The alderman paused.

"Were you on the Mount Washington road on Tuesday night—the night of the abduction?"

"I was, your Honor."

"Then tell what you heard, saw, and did there?"

"Yes, sir. It was about eight o'clock—perhaps not so late. I had been climbing the hill, and, being tired, had seated myself by the roadside away up on the top of the cliff. I suddenly heard carriage-wheels approaching at a rapid pace. Soon the carriage came in sight; and just then I heard some one halloo from the carriage. In an instant two tall, heavy fellows started from the roadside and dashed upon the vehicle."

He paused for a moment and glanced suddenly at Somerville; but he continued:

"A fracas ensued, in the course of which the man who drove the carriage was either thrown or fell from his seat. The horses took fright at once and darted toward the edge of the road, directly for the brink of the precipice. I then sprang forward and stopped the horses, sir, and, sir, saw that a lady was in the vehicle; and that lady was Miss Grace Harley. And then—sir—that's all."

He paused, as he stammered and hesitated at these last words.

There was a hum of voices in the crowd as the plain, straightforward narrative ceased.

"How came you to know Miss Harley, prisoner?" asked the alderman, suddenly.

The torrent of rich red blood that leaped into the miner's sooty, begrimed face was almost fearful, and every one, not excepting Somerville, noticed it keenly. In fact, Fairleigh Somerville glanced viciously at him as he saw that painful blushing, and he muttered a deep oath to himself and shook his head.

"Why, sir, your Honor, 'tis not for the like of me—tho' God knows I try to be an honest man—to be acquainted with such a person as Miss Grace Harley! But then, sir, I have often seen her on the drives with her father. More than that, your Honor, she once came down on a visit into our mine; I saw her then. And I have a wonderful memory of faces. Again, your Honor, Miss Harley is a friend to the poor man, and her sweet face has shed a bright light

into more than one miner's lonely cabin on the Coal Hills!"

"God bless her for it!" came instantly and unrestrainedly from the lips of several of the rough men who stood in that closely-packed room.

Conspicuous among those who spoke was old Ben Walford, the miner.

The alderman bent his head and said nothing for several moments.

"Yes, yes," at length he spoke, in a low tone. "I have heard the same, and—Why, of course, you have seen the young lady. But, again: Whose carriage was it in which she sat?"

"Mr. Somerville's, sir; I know it well."

And he gave another quick glance toward the individual named.

"Did you recognize any other person on the road at that time?" asked the alderman.

"Yes, your Honor, Mr. Somerville. As I ran up to the buggy I saw him, to the rear, rising to his knees. Besides, I knew his voice."

"Did Mr. Somerville speak to any one?"

"I heard him endeavoring to pacify his horses. I also heard him in a brief altercation with the assailants, who stood by the carriage."

"And now, a question or so more. What were you doing on the Mount Washington road at that hour?"

And the alderman looked him straight in the face.

The prisoner started perceptibly, and hesitated.

A cold, anticipating leer came to the face of Fairleigh Somerville as he pushed himself still further from the ring of spectators pressing and crowding around the prisoner. He narrowly watched Tom Worth's face.

"You heard my question, prisoner?" asked the alderman, a little impatiently.

"Yes, yes, your Honor; I heard it."

"Well, answer, then: what led you to the Mount Washington road that particular night?"

The prisoner still hesitated.

"Speak!" said the alderman, authoritatively.

"I was there, sir, on—on business," was the halting answer.

"And that business—what was it?"

Again no response from the prisoner.

The alderman repeated the question.

"I cannot tell you, sir, now. I was on business; but, your Honor, I cannot speak of it now, for I am not wholly satisfied myself. I must know that I am right before my lips shall be opened."

As he spoke these incomprehensible words he glanced for the third time at Fairleigh Somerville, over whose face a livid pallor spread as he listened to Tom Worth's singular utterances. And he felt, too, the searching glitter that flashed from the miner's large blue eyes.

He drew lightly back, but with a front of assumed coldness, said, harshly:

"I beg that your Honor will insist that the prisoner shall tell his business on the road on Tuesday night."

"Again I say to you, Mr. Somerville, be silent; and be warned now, in time, to keep your suggestions to yourself."

With this pointed rebuke the alderman turned again toward Tom Worth and said:

"I understand you, then, to decline to answer that question, prisoner? Of course you can so decline, if you feel disposed."

"I decline to answer the question now, your Honor, though the day may come when I shall demand that I may reply to it," was the singular response.

"What mean you, prisoner?" asked the alderman.

A pin might have been heard to fall as all anxiously awaited the prisoner's answer. But Tom Worth's face was calm and imperturbable as he quietly replied:

"With all deference, your Honor, I decline to answer that question also."

The alderman looked chagrined, but he could say nothing in opposition. After a pause, he asked:

"Does your cabin lay in the direction of the Mount Washington road—I mean, toward the scene of the abduction?"

"No, sir," was the prompt answer.

A triumphant look shot from Fairleigh Somerville's eyes as he hearkened to the question and the answer.

"One more question, Tom Worth, and I will be done with you. Did you return to your cabin after the events on the road?"

The prisoner hesitated a moment, and then said, distinctly:

"I did not, sir."

"Then—and this question is suggested by the other—where did you go?"

Tom Worth faltered not a moment, but answered:

"I decline to respond, your Honor."

The alderman looked vexed, and from the saturnine countenances in the assembly it was evident that the miner's case was not so bright as it was a few moments before. Even old Ben endeavored to struggle nearer his friend; but failing in the effort, he said, in a loud whisper of admonition:

"Tell his Honor, my boy! Tell him, and don't be ashamed!"

But Tom Worth paid no heed to this injunction.

Again the alderman shook his finger—this time very threateningly—toward the old miner.

"I confess, prisoner," he said, "that your failure to reply to the two questions last asked you—the only two which could go toward clearing you, so far as your own testimony is concerned—weakens your case, and I am sorry for it. That will do."

As he spoke, a low murmur went up from the crowded room. But the tumult was quickly hushed, as the alderman, glancing over the written slip of paper lying before him, said:

"Is Benjamin Walford present?"

And he glanced around him.

"Me, me, your Honor? Yes, sir; here I am, and I am not ashamed of my name; but I can tell you I know nothing against that poor boy!"

And, as the way was made for him, the old man, hat in hand, his long, gray hair falling over his shoulders, came forward.

"That remains to be seen, my good man," said the alderman, quietly. "Do you swear or affirm?"

"I'll do what Tom did, your Honor," said the old man, innocently and trustingly, "for, sir, Tom isn't the man to do anything wrong; he's been tried, your Honor."

There was something noble, lofty, in the devotion and faith of the old miner—something truly grand in his firm, unbending friendship, and it told measurably on the crowd.

As for that "boy" of old Ben's—he, the athletic six-footer, of towering stature and brawny frame—he bowed his head slowly on his breast and wiped away the big tears that filled his eyes; and then, as the old miner kissed the Testament with an audible smack, he reared himself to his fullest height, and said, as if in an irrepressible moment:

"It will be all right, Ben! Trust to God, and it will be all right!"

"Yes!" thundered the old man, now almost wild with enthusiasm; "I know it, Tom! and so does every honest man!"

It took some time for the tumult to quiet down, for old Ben was now almost unmanageable.

At last, however, with the aid of several policemen, hastily summoned by the alderman, quiet was restored, and the old miner stood ready to answer what questions might be asked him.

CHAPTER XIV.

IN THE TOILS.

FOR a moment after she was so rudely thrust into that dark, gloomy apartment, on that terrible night, Grace Harley tottered and reeled to and fro. Her ankles had been bound together so long, and so tightly had the cords been drawn, that her limbs, suddenly freed, failed to support her. She staggered backward, and throwing her tied hands over her head, sunk slowly down.

But it seemed that she had reeled over to the side of the room where a sofa was placed; for she felt herself settling down on the soft, velvety seat.

As well as she could, she felt around her with her fastened hands, tied so cruelly together; but she durst not leave the friendly sofa.

She attempted to tear the bandage from her eyes and the gag from her mouth; but owing to the cramped, confined condition of her hands, and the security with which the gag and the bandage were applied, she could not succeed.

Gradually, as she half-reclined on the soft sofa, and the damp chilliness left her person under the influence of the warm, genial atmosphere which surrounded her, the girl's scattered reason and deadened faculties of mind slowly returned to her. And then the full horror of the whole terrible transaction flashed over her.

That she was in the hands of some one who exercised a great power she could not doubt—a power to order, and to have those orders obeyed—to command and to be hearkened to.

And that some one, she argued, must indeed be a bold person, who would dare do such a deed in the midst of a large city, and only an hour or so after daylight had fled from that city, full of life—of bustle—of law!

Then, rapidly, as she sat there in the terrible silence and gloom, she thought of the prompting motive of this high-handed outrage. Could it be for the sake of money?—of extorting a high reward, by adroit acting, from her father, whom everybody knew to be rich?

No—for whoever planned the outrage and carried it into successful execution had money to do it with. That could not be the occasion.

And then, slowly—softly—gradually—then, like the glittering lightning-flash, a dark, hideous thought leaped into the bosom of Grace Harley and filled her soul with horror. And then, as wild thoughts fled like racing phantoms through her bosom, the girl, with a gurgling

cry, staggered to her feet and tottered around the room—seeking escape, somewhere—anywhere.

But soon her head came in cruel contact with the hard wall, and she fell almost entirely senseless to the floor.

And there she lay, still and motionless, seeming scarcely to breathe—her frame quivering with convulsive shudders which swept wildly over her, but making no sound nor striving to rise.

For a long time she lay thus—certainly an hour—uttering no cry—no groan—stirring not hand or foot; but in her soul she was praying earnestly to God for strength and protection.

At length her breath seemed to go entirely away, so motionless she lay, when suddenly there sounded without the grinding crush of carriage-wheels. The vehicle seemed to roll up to the door and pause.

Then came the quick, heavy tread of a man walking, and then the half-unconscious girl heard a key grating in the lock, then felt a cold blast from without rush in. This was quickly shut out, and then a heavy tread, though it gave no sound on the thick carpet, shook the room.

A moment more, and a pale, uncertain glimmer, red and indistinct, fell on her sight, seen through the thick folds of the fillet over her eyes.

"Ah! we have you here at last, Grace Harley, and safely caged!" said a rough, harsh voice. "Well, you have a handsome cage, at all events, as you shall quickly see! Nay, struggle not at all—I will gladly assist you!"

And the person as he spoke—it was evidently the tone of a man—stepped forward, took her neither rudely nor gently by the arm, and conducted her to the sofa.

"Be seated, and fear not; there—so. Now you are comfortable, I hope. . . . Listen to me, Grace Harley," continued the man, after a pause, in a deep, discordant voice, not one tone of which the poor girl could recognize; "I have not much time to spend to-night here, for business beckons me hence. But, listen. I have followed and tracked you for many months—whether or not you know it, I care not. I have sworn—in another's interest—I would conquer you or—break your heart, Grace Harley! Nay, start not; I am not evil-disposed, nor do you know me. And, heed it, my girl, I have never broken an oath or violated a vow! You are in my power at last—after weeks and months of toil, but, in me, fear nothing. Now, a word of advice to you, fair miss. A friend of mine—one dearer to me than other living man, for he has served me many good turns—loves you—loves you honestly. He is not old or uncomely—and—all will be well if you say *yes* to his pleading. He has sworn to wed no other woman than you; be obstinate, and a living death awaits you; for, before you leave this house, you shall promise to be his wife! Nay; nay; start not. . . . Before I go, I will unbind your hands and eyes, and give you, likewise, liberty of speech. But, promise me by nodding your head, that after you are released you will not remove the bandage from your eyes until you hear the door close."

The girl, scarcely breathing, hesitated, and then quietly bowed her head in acquiescence.

"Good!" said the man. . . . "You will find everything in this room for your comfort, but you will find it, likewise, a perfect cage from which there is no escape. You are therefore at liberty to make every effort you can at escape, but I would counsel you to be quiet, for those who could hear and aid you are far from here. Be wise, and be patient! . . . Now your hands are unbound, and I'll bid you adieu for the night."

So saying, the man strode quickly to the door, opened it, and, going out, slammed it to.

In an instant Grace Harley tore the bandage from her eyes, the gag from her mouth, and, in a half-stupor, gazed at the dazzling splendor of the room in which she was imprisoned.

At that instant the door opened quickly again and the man, clutching the skirt of his coat—which had caught in the jamb—tore it nearly away.

One quick glance revealed to the poor girl a tall, slender figure enveloped in a long overcoat, a black, heavy beard covering the face, and a slouched hat dragged over the eyes.

In an instant, however, the man was gone.

CHAPTER XV.

UNDER LOCK AND KEY.

OLD BEN WOLFORD stood ready to answer. The old man, though not confused, was rather nervous and out of place as he stood there. He cast a deprecating look at his friend, Tom Worth, who stood so near him, so firmly held in the clutches of the law; and the old man's look seemed to say:

"I am sorry, Tom, but old Ben cannot tell a lie, even to save his friend."

"I have only a question or so to ask you, my good man," said the alderman, encouragingly, "and will not keep you long. When did you see Tom Worth last before the night of the outrage on the Mount Washington road—that

is, when did you see him last before Tuesday night?"

Old Ben thought for a moment and then, looking up, said:

"Why, let me see, your Honor! Yes, I saw him at eleven o'clock, Tuesday morning, in the mine. I know this, for Mr. Hayhurst, our overseer, you know, had—"

"Yes, that is all right; you have answered the question. Did you see him again that day?"

"No, sir, your Honor; but then I know—"

"Enough. Does Tom Worth occupy the same dwelling with you?"

"Yes, sir; and a good cabin it is. Tom has been with me now ever since—"

"That will do; simply reply to my questions."

"True enough, and easy for you to say so, your Honor; but then, what I have to say won't do my boy there any good unless I can explain."

A smile spread over the alderman's face, but in that smile there was nothing like a sneer. He respected that old man's heroic devotion too much for that.

"Never fear, never fear!" he said, emphatically. "The prisoner shall have justice. Now, was Tom Worth at your cabin on Tuesday night at all?"

The old miner crushed his hat between his hands, cast down his head, as if in thought, and then said, as if each word cut him to the heart:

"No, your Honor, *he was not*. Tom! Tom! I must tell the truth!" exclaimed the old man, in tones of anguish, to his friend.

A noble look of gratitude came over the prisoner's face, as, without uttering a word, he bowed his head.

The alderman looked chagrined; he evidently sympathized with Tom Worth, and he knew how damaging the old man's unthinking, deprecating words would be.

"You will not aid your friend, my good man," he said, suggestively and sternly, "by giving way to such impulses. Simply answer my questions, and add nothing to your answers. Now, again: When did you see Tom Worth after Tuesday night?"

"Why, the next night, your Honor—Wednesday night, sir, about ten o'clock. Mr. Somerville had just gone, sir, when my boy came in."

"Mr. Somerville?"

"Yes, your Honor; he said he was in search of Tom, and that Tom had done this rascally business. I told him—"

"I dare say I am not 'suggesting' anything, your Honor," said Somerville, with a half-sneer, stepping forward hastily, "when I *hint*, sir, that *this* evidence has nothing to do with the case in hand."

The alderman frowned then colored slightly; but he answered, at once:

"You are right, Mr. Somerville, but this testimony may be available and judicious at a future time."

At these words, spoken with a most significant emphasis, Tom Worth himself looked up. As for Fairleigh Somerville, he turned first pale, then red, and bowing his head, as if he cared not to say anything further, drew back in the crowd.

The alderman turned again to old Ben.

"Then, my man," he said, "you are sure that the last time you saw the prisoner before the event on the mountain was at eleven A. M. of Tuesday, in the mine; that he did not return to his cabin at all that night, nor until the next night, Wednesday night, about ten o'clock?"

"Yes, sir, your Honor; you have given it just right, and much better than I did."

"Then stand aside; I have done with you."

"Thank you, your Honor."

And the old man drew to one side.

"FAIRLEIGH SOMERVILLE!" said the alderman, aloud, again consulting the slip before him.

A murmur, the nature of which could not be determined, ran through the crowd as the name of young Somerville was pronounced, but the faces of the hard-working men—who formed a large portion of the assembly—showed unmistakably the import of that murmur.

The young man was not popular; he saw it himself—perhaps already knew it; but he was quite self-composed, as, unbuttoning his overcoat, to show, it seemed, the handsome gold guard dependent from his vest button-hole, and the scintillating diamonds gleaming in his shirt-bosom, he stepped forward and stood, with haughty air, before the alderman.

The oath was administered at once, and then the alderman asked, very abruptly:

"What do you know of this affair, Mr. Somerville?"

The question was so sudden, so harsh, even, that young Somerville started perceptibly—so much so that all present noticed his perturbation of manner.

Tom Worth, standing erect, and, all at once, with a half-defiant port, gazed fixedly, searchingly at the confused witness.

"Why, sir," at length stammered Somerville, looking up with a front of assumed boldness and carelessness, "I do not know much of the

affair, and I fancied my evidence was in regard to what I know of the prisoner's connection with the offense."

"Very good, sir; as you will. Tell it in your own way," said the alderman, crustily.

"Well, sir, I was driving home rapidly on Tuesday night with Miss Harley, intending to take her to her father's residence in Alleghany City, when, on the bleakest and loneliest part of the road, leading around the brow of Mount Washington, I suddenly was assailed by two men who dashed out from the roadside. In the distance, crouched by the roadside, I saw another man."

He paused.

The prisoner started, and bent his gaze more fixedly than ever upon the witness.

"You saw another—well?"

"Yes, your Honor, and at that moment I was hurled, half-stunned, from my carriage. When I turned around the horses had started off, and then I saw this third man at their head, and forcing them back from the precipice. I then thought that this was a gallant act, but I cannot think so now."

He paused again for a moment; there was a deathlike silence.

"In a moment," resumed the witness, "the three men approached the carriage. Of course I was but a baby in their hands."

Tom Worth started violently, and his face grew black.

"I was thrown to the ground and bound securely, at the same time receiving a blow which rendered me senseless. When I opened my eyes in consciousness again I saw a one-horse open wagon standing by my own team, which had been securely hitched by the roadside. I could nowhere see Miss Harley, and one of the men had disappeared. But I did see two men mount hastily into the open wagon and drive off. And, your Honor," and he fixed his eyes steadily on Tom Worth's face, "I solemnly swear that one of those men—*he who drove*—had every appearance that this man, the prisoner, has."

"My God!" groaned Tom Worth, and his head went down on his breast. "Tis false, false! your Honor!"

"Yes, your Honor, false as false can be!" thundered old Ben, again forgetting all restraint, or, indeed, caring nothing for it.

"Silence, old man! Another offense like this, and I'll put you under arrest!" said the alderman, very sternly.

"That will do, Mr. Somerville," he continued, making a gesture for that young gentleman to stand aside.

Then a loud murmur came up from the crowd, and their changed looks showed that however much their sympathies had been with the prisoner, they were certainly different now.

Old Ben Walford seemed bewildered, but, whenever his gaze fell upon the face of his friend, the old man's cheeks and eyes would glow again with an unswerving friendship and devotion.

"EDWARD MARKLEY!" called out the alderman, consulting the paper before him.

There was a slight stir in the crowd, and a short, stout, matter-of-fact, honest-looking, red-faced man stepped promptly forward and stood before the alderman.

"That's my name, your Honor," he said, as he placed his right hand composedly upon the Testament held out to him.

The requisite oath was soon administered. Every one pressed forward to hear what this witness had to say, for all knew him, and he was everywhere well known.

"What is your occupation?" asked the alderman.

"I am a toll-keeper on the Smithfield street bridge, sir," was the reply, given as if the speaker was proud of his place.

"Which end of the bridge?"

"The Birmingham side, sir," replied the man.

"Did you see Tom Worth on Tuesday night, the night of the abduction of Miss Harley on Mount Washington?"

"I did, your Honor—twice."

Tom Worth started violently, and gazed hard at the witness, while the same black cloud mentioned before passed over his face.

But the toll-keeper was very calm, and evidently was speaking the truth; he flinched not at all before the lowering gaze of the prisoner.

"Twice?" asked the alderman.

"Twice, your Honor."

Tom Worth turned suddenly, and an answer seemed about to spring to his lips; but he controlled himself and retained a decorous silence.

"Tell me the occasion of your seeing him the first, and then the second time. But first state whether or not you know the prisoner—know him well enough to swear to his identity."

"Lord bless your Honor! Know him! Yes, indeed! and to tell the truth, your Honor, I never knew a better man, until this business transpired!"

"That has nothing to do with the case. Do not volunteer or give any more opinions, unless asked."

"Beg pardon, your Honor," said the witness, deferentially.

"Go on, Mr. Markley, and relate when you first saw the prisoner that Tuesday night," said the alderman.

"Yes, your Honor. It was early in the evening—certainly not later than half-past seven o'clock. The prisoner there came across the bridge and passed in the light of the gas-lamp by my toll-office. I saw him distinctly."

"How was he dressed?" asked the alderman.

"In his mining suit, sir—his overcoat buttoned around him."

"Did you speak to him?"

"No, sir; I was engaged at the time, and Tom, coming from the city side, did not stop at all."

"Did you watch him?"

"No, your Honor; I had no occasion; besides, my own business was enough for me to attend to."

"Was the prisoner alone?"

"Yes, your Honor; I suppose so, though, at first, I thought he was in company with two other miners, who passed just ahead of him, coming likewise from the city side."

"Two others?"

"Yes, sir—miners, too. I told them by their dress."

"Did you know these two?"

"I think not, and their faces were turned down the river, your Honor; I could not see them."

The alderman pondered for a moment, and then asked:

"Well, the second time; when was it, and under what circumstances did you see the prisoner?"

"It was late in the evening, about half-past eight o'clock, I should judge. An open wagon drove rapidly down the Mount Washington road, and stopped at the bridge to pay toll. The wagon was an open country vehicle, drawn by one horse. In that wagon lay a dark-looking heap; what it was I don't know, but I do know that two men sat on the driving-board of the wagon, and that he who drove was TOM WORTH!"

With a half-cry, the prisoner turned toward him in a mute appeal. But that witness was an honest fellow; he prided himself especially on that one characteristic, and he would not fly from his position though a world were in arms against him.

As if in reply to the prisoner's look and appeal he said, firmly:

"Yes, Tom, it was you, and you know it, for I spoke to you, and asked you where you were going. You replied, very roughly, something about your name being in everybody's mouth, and then drove on. To tell you the truth, your Honor," said the man, rather familiarly, "this was so unlike Tom Worth, as I know him, that, though against my will, I took it for granted he was a little in liquor."

"That will do, Mr. Markley," said the alderman, slowly, after a long pause, during which an almost perfect silence was preserved in the crowded room.

And then ensued a low, continuous buzz throughout the apartment as the alderman, consulting several memorandums he had made during the progress of the testimony, seemed lost in thought.

Some five or ten minutes elapsed, and then, slowly straightening himself back in his chair, the alderman said, in a clear, distinct voice:

"I have heard all, prisoner, that thus far could be said in your favor, and all that up to this stage of proceedings could be said against you. I will not conceal that the case looks black against you; yet, I know well of your uniform good standing and reputation, and I have already received from your employers letters showing their implicit confidence in you."

"God bless them!" murmured the prisoner, deeply.

"Nevertheless," continued the alderman, "as the case stands, and on the testimony elicited against you, I must commit, or release you on bail."

"And how much, your Honor?" suddenly asked old Ben Walford, striding forward.

"Two thousand dollars," said the alderman, after a little reflection and deliberation.

"Oh, God! I haven't that much, your Honor!" exclaimed old Ben; "but—but, sir, I have one thousand! Take that, sir, and I'll go to jail in his place for the rest! Only don't send him, your Honor; he's too young—he's too—"

"Enough, enough, my good man," said the alderman, evidently moved, as was every one present, save Fairleigh Somerville; "I cannot accept such bail, though—"

"Then you can accept mine, sir!" exclaimed Mr. Hayhurst, the overseer of the Black Diamond Mine, in a clear voice, promptly stepping forward. "I am worth, sir, ten thousand dollars, good money; I'll go Tom Worth's bail, even for the whole amount!"

A half-cheer followed this declaration.

"It will do, sir; and I accept you as the prisoner's bail," said the alderman, as if he was truly glad bail had been found.

As he was about to draw the papers toward

him, Tom Worth, with a terrible burning in his eyes, exclaimed, suddenly:

"No! no! your Honor! I will not have it thus, though I am deeply grateful to my friends for their kindness, and you, your Honor, for your leniency. But, I'll go to jail, and I'll stand my trial; and, at some future day, I'll unmask villainy! I am determined!"

No arguments could persuade the prisoner to alter his determination, though old Ben, in his frenzy and bewilderment, came near chastising him.

And then Tom Worth was regularly committed and led to the van.

CHAPTER XVI.

MIDNIGHT WHISPERINGS.

NIGHT gloomed down over the place; the city lay quiet—sleeping beneath the heavy pall of darkness and its own constantly overhanging clouds of soot and smoke.

It had been an eventful day in this city of iron and coal—the day just passed; and in certain circles an excitement was created, seldom witnessed.

The main incidents of this singular case of abduction may still be remembered by many worthy denizens of the Smoky Town; and to the author's certain knowledge—for we have seen him recently—the estimable alderman before whom Tom Worth had his preliminary examination, is to-day living.

Of course such court cases, nevertheless, occur daily in all our great cities, but they are quickly decided, and are rapidly and speedily forgotten. The ripple on the surface of society they may create gradually, nay, oftenest, rapidly, trembles away toward the shores, and is lost amid the wavelets that fret and break upon the margin of the life-sea.

So it may be of the incidents in the tale we are weaving. We have chosen it from among several—have dignified it, and given it prominence and importance. Of course, attention will be drawn to it, and there may be some, or many, who will cavil at its truthfulness, and doubt the authenticity of the case as we have recorded it.

To such we will simply say, consult the criminal annals of the city for that particular twelve months—only ten years since—and you will find the case. Of course, we have changed it in some particulars, to suit our purpose; but you can find it, and the good-natured clerk of the court, for a small fee, will allow you to sit in his large, musty office on Grant's Hill and look over the record to your heart's content. We have simply "varnished" the tale, in accordance with the privilege of authorship, but we have not obscured its truth thereby.

Well, then, it was night over the city, and the worthy (and unworthy) denizens of the place were for the most part wrapped in slumber, some perhaps dreaming of gold, others of approaching happiness; others, perhaps, of the singular trial witnessed that day at Alderman March's office on Penn street, and the very strange conduct on the part of Tom Worth, "the poor miner," as he was generally spoken of.

That night, about eleven o'clock, a man stood at the corner of Bedford avenue and Fulton street; he had just reached the intersection of the two streets, and then stood there, looking around him in every direction, as if undecided which way to go, whether on up the avenue, or out into the street, and thence to the summit of Cliff Hill.

As he stood thus, hesitating and undecided, he suddenly heard footsteps behind him. The place was lonely and unfrequented at all times; now it was deserted and desolate. The man hastily thrust his hand in his bosom, and backed himself up against the embankment, as if to let the other pass.

The man who was coming up, evidently from the not very distant Boyd's Hill, had seen the other as he stood at the corner of the two streets; but he did not hesitate. He continued straight on, turned into Bedford avenue, and was hurrying down the steep descent, when he was suddenly hailed by the motionless one. He stopped short in his walk, and with a light laugh turned back.

"Ah, my fine fellow; I was sure it was you, and walked by to try you, to see if you would know your boss."

"I did not indeed know you, boss, until I saw that long coat; then I would have sworn 'twas you."

"Yes, the coat, ha! ha! But, my good fellow, how is it? Any suspicious characters around the nest?"

"No, boss; none."

"Glad to hear it!" exclaimed the other: "from what that infernal scoundrel, now in jail—may he rot there!—said, I feared that others perhaps might think as he did."

"I do not know what he said, boss, but I do know that that fellow followed two others from Boyd's Hill on Tuesday night—ha! ha!"

"Yes, he did; and, by heavens! that toll-keeper, Markley, saw him afterward with one of these same fellows! Good thing that evidence of Markley's; but I have seen several men, cer-

tainly one, who resembled that jail-bird considerably, eh?"

"You're right, boss; so have I! And, perhaps—"

"Yes, you, I know what you would say, and here, my fine fellow, is a purse containing gold. 'Tis yours; and now good-night!" These words were spoken in a significant tone.

"Good-night, boss," replied the other, and without a word more of this singular, incoherent conversation, which despite the loneliness of the place, had been carried on in a half-whisper, the men separated—the one styled "boss" continuing down Bedford avenue, toward the heart of the sleeping city; the other turning abruptly off from the same avenue, and was soon lost in the shades that hung over the tall Cliff Hill.

Tom Worth sat on a low stool one long hour after his incarceration, but he was suddenly aroused by the key grating and creaking in the lock, and then the cell-door was opened. One of the jailer's underlings appeared, lugging after him a huge bundle of bed-clothing.

"An old man brought this for you," he said, in a kind tone, "and we allowed him to leave it. Here is a note, also, which he sent; we have examined it, and you are allowed to receive it." So saying the man spread out the bundle of coverlets and comforters, and gave the miner the blurred and blotted note.

In a moment he was gone.

Tom Worth opened the note, and his big heart throbbed. His eyes filled with tears as he read the few rudely written lines:

"DEAR, DEAR BOY:—"

"I thought you might be cold to-night, my poor Tom, and so I have sent you your covering. I will also say, my dear boy, that I am awful lonesome without you, and that I have cried like a calf about you. Tom; and, Tom, I will pray to God for your safety. Your friend till death, "B. W."

The hours sped on, and still Tom Worth thought not of lying down. Eleven o'clock, and then twelve o'clock struck, and the prisoner arose.

Suddenly, far above him, at a little grate in the cell, looking into the jail-yard, he heard a cautious "hist!" He glanced up, but could see nothing. Then he heard a low voice, but he drank in every word:

"I followed you, Tom, and I know where they have put you. Speak, my boy! I have twenty stout fellows in hail, who'll tear these bars out for you! Speak the word, and say you're NOT guilty, Tom! Time flies!"

"No, no, Ben! Go home and pray for me, but no violence, if you love me," was the cautious reply.

"Then good-by, Tom," came in tremulous tones, after a moment's pause, from the speaker above. "I'll do as you say."

"Good-by, God bless you, Ben!"

All was silent again; no more whispers came, and Tom Worth was once more alone.

CHAPTER XVII.

A FRIEND THAT STICKS.

As warped and misdirected as were Mr. Harley's notions of right and wrong, in this particular instance, yet our readers must not forget that he was a father, with only one link to bind him to the memory of her who now slept the lasting sleep, beneath a costly mausoleum in Hilldale Cemetery.

He was a fond and doting parent; and the one short week which had elapsed since the sudden disappearance of his daughter, had wrought a marvelous change in the old man. His pomposity of manner had left him; the quick flashing of his imperious eye was now subdued and faint. His haughty stride was now an old man's tottering, feeble step; his every gesture a palpable sign of weakness, a lack of moral and physical nerve.

The ruddy flush of health had passed away from his round, pale cheek, leaving a hollow and a deathlike pallor there. Dr. Breeze, who more than once, in his own frank, cordial manner, had called to see how matters were, and if any tidings had been heard of the missing maiden, noted the altered appearance of his friend, and had covertly stolen his finger over the irregular, jerking pulse, throbbing so heavily under the hot surface of the feverish wrist. And then the old physician had hinted that he had better take care of himself.

The fact is, old Mr. Harley had been thinking a good deal—had been thinking of the unfinished sentence—the incomplete words of Tom Worth, the miner—of the noble, honest look of that poor man. And then gradually he had thought to himself that it was hard to believe Tom Worth guilty of the dark crime, though he had been quick to believe it. But Fairleigh Somerville had said so!

The old man, sitting late one night in his library, suddenly rose to his feet; a thought had come over him; if possible he would see Tom Worth in his cell!

Still no tidings of the girl; still the old man's rich reward was unclaimed!

We have mentioned that one week had elapsed since the arrest and commitment of

Tom Worth for the alleged abduction of Grace Harley.

The time had passed slowly with the unfortunate prisoner. He was a strong man, and one accustomed to daily, vigorous exercise. It may be imagined that an existence, confined to a narrow cell of twelve feet square, and hardly high enough in the ceiling to allow him to stand upright, was one of irksomeness to such a man as Tom Worth. The hours dragged themselves slowly away to him, and he prayed for the night to come, that he might find quiet and forgetfulness in slumber.

For two days no one was allowed to see him, save the turnkey, who, accompanied by an underling, appeared twice a day at the iron door, with the prisoner's meals. This turnkey was kindly disposed toward the unfortunate man whom he fed, for, on every fitting occasion he had a good word—one of cheer, to speak to him.

The fact is, there were many in Pittsburgh who did not entirely believe that Tom Worth was guilty of the crime imputed to him. They thought it strange that a man who had really committed an offense against the law, should peremptorily refuse to accept bail! To them it was a powerful argument that he had preferred to await his trial, at no risk to his friends, and had gone to jail, instead of taking his liberty, which had been almost forced upon him.

Among those who thus thought, though he kept his musings and opinions to himself, was the jailer. So he was very kind to the poor miner, and sought, by all means in his power, to show his sympathy, so as not to go beyond the bounds of propriety as a public officer.

But Tom Worth scarcely noticed this; he was so completely wrapt up in his own thoughts, in his own dreamings, that he paid but little heed to aught else.

Thanks to the kind remembrance of old Ben, he did not suffer in his prison home. He had a good bed, with an abundance of warm covering.

But old Ben had not been allowed to see his friend, though he had pleaded earnestly to that effect.

On the third day after his incarceration the prisoner requested the use of paper and ink. The jailer hesitated only for a moment.

"Certainly, Tom," he said, "you shall have them. But you know no letters can be sent out unless they are inspected first."

"Very good, sir. I simply wished to make certain notes in this case of mine. You know, sir, that I am to be tried, and—" his voice faltered—"I am a poor man, and can engage no lawyer. I must make an effort and defend myself."

For a moment the jailer looked at him.

"You shall have paper and ink," he at length said, in a low voice, "and, Tom, mention it to nobody else—why, though a poor man myself, and with children to feed, yet—why, you see that—well, Tom, in a word, I can let you have fifty dollars. Lawyer Cochrane is a whole-souled man, and he'll defend you for that," and the jailer, as he jingled the heavy keys in the lock, looked at the prisoner again.

"May God bless you and yours, my good friend!" said Tom Worth, as a tear stood in his eye. "I hope the day may yet come when I can tell you how much I am indebted to you. But I'll not take the money. Keep it, my good fellow, for your children, and may God bless you and them!"

On the next day—that is, the fourth day after his arrest—Tom Worth was startled to hear the bolts of his prison-door rattle in the lock. The door was opened. In another moment he was locked in the embrace of Ben Walford.

"I've come, Tom, come at last," said the old man, with emotion, "to tell you that I haven't forgot you, my poor boy, and to hug you to my old heart again. God bless you, Tom!"

The jailer turned his eyes away, as he saw the two strong men meet, and heard the words of true devotion which fell from the rough old man's lips.

"Heaven bless you, Ben!" was all that the prisoner could utter.

"I came only to say, Tom," continued the old man, "that I am true to you, my boy; to say keep up your spirits; to tell you, my boy, to try and come back soon, for the hours pass lonesomely in my cabin at night without you; and now! ah! how sorrowfully the wind moans over the mountain, to me, all alone! But, good-by, Tom; good-by, and may God bless you!"

Then the old miner was gone.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A NIGHT COMPACT AND A WIND-WAIF.

NIGHT once more had fallen upon Pittsburgh. The lamps were lit in the smoky streets, and the bell from the neighboring spire had struck nine o'clock. The thoroughfares and avenues wore a deserted look. There were but few persons yet stirring abroad, for the air was chilly and wet, and grates, furnaces and fire-places made it more pleasant to court the comforts of indoors. Despite the chilliness of the night, however, there were walkers abroad, and those

who, muffled up and thoroughly concealed, prowled about.

Such were two men.

They had just left the dingy *purlieus* of the Shinley Property in Alleghany City, and entered Cedar avenue. They continued their way rapidly on, and at last emerged from the nest of great iron houses huddled by the river-bank, near the Fort Wayne railroad bridge.

They here glanced around them for a moment, as they stood on the silent abutment. Then, with a half-uttered exclamation of satisfaction, they turned off simultaneously, and were soon within the gloomy recesses of the bridge.

Fifteen minutes elapsed before they emerged from the long bridge and plunged into the dark depths of the sleeping city, on the other side of the river.

They hurried rapidly on until they reached the straight double track of the Pennsylvania Railroad; turning abruptly down which they strode on for several hundred yards.

Suddenly they paused.

"Here we are, Launce," said one of the men, glancing up at the steep face of the cliff to his right.

The speaker was entirely enveloped in a long cloak, reaching almost to his feet.

"'Tis a rough climb, and we must do it, for it cuts off a long tramp. Come, let's go at it!"

The man turned off the track, and began to climb the high, precipitous hill. His companion followed obediently at his heels. The ascent was arduous, but they did not turn back—did not even pause. They had an object in view—at least one of them had, and they kept on faithfully.

A full half-hour elapsed before they stood panting, almost exhausted, on the crowning point of Cliff Hill.

"Come, Launce, let us go down Bedford avenue, and get out of the reach of this infernal wind," said the tall man in the long overcoat.

Without stopping to rest they hastened down Fulton street, and did not pause until they were sheltered in the banks that rose above Bedford avenue.

"Sit down, Launce, somewhere, anywhere, and let's have our final talk about that little matter—your departure."

The man called Launce did not reply at once; he seemed to be thinking.

"Yes, boss, yes. But, boss, it seems to me mighty hard to force a man away from his home, and—"

"Force you! Nonsense! It will only be for a time; and then, remember, Launce, suppose you were found out! How about the law in your case, *resemblance or no resemblance?*"

The man started.

"True, true, boss," he said, rather humbly. "But, sir, it is hard to say good-by to my poor wife and children! They, sir, do not know that I am a wicked man. I am always gentle and kind to them, boss, they are mine!"

"Again I say nonsense, Launce! You will be paid well—more than ever before. I will pay you to-night. And then, why, tell your wife that you are going on business to Altoona, or further east, to Huntingdon, or—"

"But, boss, I am not going on business, and I never told poor Mary a lie!"

"Then begin at once! Confound you for an obstinate ass, that you are!" exclaimed the other, in an angry tone. "Do you prefer that I should tell that little affair in the mine—have you put in jail where perhaps you belong? What would your 'poor Mary' think then?"

"No, no, boss! Don't talk of that! I'll do anything; but keep that from her! Yet, boss," he suddenly continued, in a firm voice, "could I not tell something on you, and—"

"Dare breathe one word, my fine fellow, and I would shoot you dead in the court-room! Do not tempt me too far. You and Teddy are in my power—do not forget it! Now, my terms are these: You shall not lose your position while you are absent. You can resume it when you return. You shall be absent one month; at the expiration of that time the trial will be over, and Edward Markley's testimony cannot be subverted. After that event come when you feel like it, but, mark me, return with a smooth face. In payment for this service I will give into your hands, this very night, at this very spot, the sum of two hundred dollars in gold. Besides that, Launce, it is as much for your interest as mine that you should be away from Pittsburgh—and you know why. That coincidence was a most fortunate thing for me! yes! I do not conceal it—for me!"

The other answered not for several moments; he had seated himself again by the roadside, on the rude stone, and his head was bent upon his breast. But at length, without looking up, he said:

"'Tis all right, boss, and I will obey; but, boss, you promised me a little *extra pay* for carrying victuals for a certain person to the old house, you know, sir. I would not tell you of it, sir, but every little thing counts for poor Mary and the children, you know."

"Exactly, Launce; your memory is good; I hadn't forgot my promise. You shall have five

dollars extra; that's enough. But are you particular to wear your mask, and answer to no questions?"

"Yes, sir, though this person has never spoken a word to me; and, boss, how do you get along there?" and the man peered straight at him whom he addressed.

The "boss" answered at once.

"Not well, confound the jade! she is as obstinate as can be. Besides, she has pulled a spike out of the wall, which supported a heavy picture frame, and, in a measure, she defies me! But she is failing. She cannot see daylight, thanks to my no-window-palace, and she is pining—wishes to die, and all that sort of foolish thing. When headstrong maidens get thus, under such circumstances, the end is not far off, and they'll be glad to own a man as a husband who thus triumphs over obstinacy and prejudice. I must have her and her gold!"

"I am half sorry for that girl, boss; she's a good woman, and is kind to us," said Launce.

"Dare show your sympathy for her by word or sign, and I tell you, Launce, your life would be cheap at nothing! Hark you well—and I am not given to trifling!"

"I'll not disobey you, boss, in anything. But now, when shall I go from these parts?"

"Day after to-morrow, by the eastern-bound morning train. Stop where you may, but nowhere under thirty miles from Pittsburgh. Let me know where that stopping-place may be as soon as you are there. Confound this wind! How rough it is!"

The wind had indeed risen, and was howling in gusts along the deep cut of the narrow street, and over the high hill on which they stood.

The man who last spoke—the "boss"—rose to his feet, buttoned his overcoat closer around his chin, and drew the heavy woolen scarf high up about his neck.

The other man arose also.

"We must say good-by, Launce. When you return you will know where to go—every Tuesday night, now, in the 'Shinley,' you know. Here, take the roll; it contains two hundred dollars in twenty-dollar gold pieces; and here," taking a bank-bill from his vest-pocket, "is a five-dollar note. Carry this vixen her food to-morrow, and on the following morning Teddy will relieve you. Good-by."

"Good-by, boss," replied the other, taking the money, "and thank you, too, sir."

The two men separated—Launce returning up Cliff Hill, which he descended to the track of the railroad; and then he was soon lost in the gloom toward the Union Depot.

The other started down Bedford avenue, turned abruptly to the left, and, winding his way along a deep gully, and across an open common, he finally entered Stephenson street, up which he strode at a rapid stride.

The hours grew on, and the black night came down, blacker every moment. The hoarse wind, now blowing a half-hurricane, tore shudderingly through the dark streets, banging unbolted shutters, and swinging creaking signs with its breath of storm and fury.

So rough indeed and wild was the driving gale that it shook the mysterious old house on Boyd's Hill to its foundations.

Half asleep, and yet far from being asleep in the true sense of the word, Grace Harley, within the one strange room of that old habitation, sat leaning on her elbow, as she heard the mad wind howling and roaring outside, and as she felt the uncertain tremor of the structure, as, exposed on the top of the bleak hill to the full fury of the hurricane, it shook and vibrated fearfully.

Then she sat upright. A low light was burning from the splendid chandelier—just enough to reveal the gorgeous, glaring paintings hanging on the walls—enough to show the costly carpet and the rare furniture of the apartment; enough, too, to light up the haggard cheek, the lack-luster eye, the failing form of the wretched girl.

"Good heavens!" she murmured, "what is that? Am I to die thus and here, all alone?"

The hideous thought that the house would be blown down rushed over her brain.

"What is that?" she again suddenly exclaimed, as a rustling, rattling sound, as if something was being driven down the chimney, fell upon her ear.

The girl cowered away upon the sofa in very dread. Then the cause of the singular noise was, all at once, explained.

A stray newspaper, tattered and bedraggled, caught by the wanton wind, had been literally forced down the chimney flue.

With a faint, sickly smile at her own needless terror, the girl drew near and picked up the paper. It was an old number, dated two days after the event on the Mount Washington road.

Grace Harley cast her eyes over it. Suddenly she started as her eyes fell on a particular paragraph—her eyes seeming to gloat over the printed words.

She hastily turned the light on, and sinking into a chair, commenced to scan that short paragraph. At that instant, however a heavy step sounded without, and the girl just had time, as a wild shudder swept over her frame, to

cram the newspaper into her bosom, and shrink back to the sofa she had left, as a key grated harshly in the lock.

CHAPTER XIX.

TOM WORTH'S TWO VISITORS.

On the afternoon of the day, the night succeeding which, with its startling events, has been given in the foregoing chapter, Tom Worth sat sad and lonesome in his cell.

The creeping wind on the outside forced itself through the narrow grating, high above him on a level with the ground, and chilled the damp apartment.

The prisoner sat with his back against his little bed, with a blanket thrown over his shoulders. As usual he had been writing; but the gloom of an early evening had settled down, obscuring the light, so that he could no longer discern the characters he was tracing. So, the prisoner had pushed the written sheets back on the little table, and was now seated, buried in thought.

What the miner was cogitating about, can only be inferred from the nature of his situation, the depressing circumstances surrounding him, and the grave charges against him—for the which, he was now confined to the limits of four damp walls. Tom Worth was a man who did not deal in soliloquy, but one who rather occupied his time in *thinking*—in linking this thought into that inference—deducing this conclusion from that premise, and making a brief, rapid summary from the whole.

On this particular evening, the man's face was dejected—more so than it had been since the day of his appearance before the alderman; for now, with the expression of deep thought that habitually marked his countenance, there was unmistakably commingled an air of dejection—of anxious, brooding care.

"Would to God I were certain before I make my move! Seeing is believing, beyond a doubt; and there is something to be unmasked!" He talked as if in a dream.

He said nothing more, but bent his head in thought again. An hour passed, when the door was opened, and the jailer appeared.

"I come to tell you, Tom," he said, kindly, "that I have brought your friend to see you again. I have searched him. By orders received to-day, visitors may be allowed to remain with you half an hour."

"Thank you, kindly, my good man," said Tom, rising to his feet.

In another moment old Ben Walford, almost too full to speak, entered the cell, and as the old man and the young met, in a strong, soul-yearning embrace, the jailer stole silently away.

Glorious privilege for the poor prisoner! glorious privilege, too, for the honest friend, the sterling man, old Ben Walford, the sooty miner!

For several moments the two remained locked in the warm embrace; and then seated themselves side by side.

"God help you, Ben, my dear friend! You, alone, are a friend to me now!"

"I am a friend to you, my dear boy, and there's no man in the mines that will dare gainsay it. But then, Tom, you have other good friends—and in the mines, too; and, hark you, my boy, in your ear: say the word yourself, and they'll show it!"

"I understand you, Ben," said the prisoner, after a pause; "but I cannot consent to it. It would be setting law at defiance; it would be an acknowledgment of guilt! I cannot consent."

"As you say, Tom!" replied the old man, at once; but then he added, half-defiantly: "though, if you would just hint such a thing, Tom, we would tear this old jail down, stone by stone, to get you out! Another thing, Tom: that broad-cloth rascal, Fairleigh Somerville, daresn't show his ugly face near the breaker of the Black Diamond! Even Mr. Hayhurst has promised him a mauling!"

"No violence, Ben, no violence, for, in the end, it would injure me. Be calm, be cool, be temperate, for I am to be tried."

"Yes, yes, Tom, but by the Eternal Pillars! you are innocent—innocent of this rascality, Tom, and we all know it!"

"Nay, nay, Ben, but it must be proved on the day of trial," said the prisoner, vehemently.

"And that lying toll-keeper, Markley," continued the old man, "came near getting a thrashing from our engineer."

"Do not blame Markley, either, Ben. I am convinced he was a friend of mine, and I believe he told the truth, to the best of his ability."

"What! Why, Tom! This is worse than not taking bail!" exclaimed the old man, with an irrepressible indignation. "You don't pretend to say that Edward Markley saw you that night, in the wagon?"

But Tom Worth did not choose to answer this question; he cast his eyes up, as if in a dream. And then, as if communing with himself, he said, slowly:

"'Tis strange! very strange, that—"

"Infernal strange, I tell you, Tom, for you to talk so! I do hope you won't make old Ben Walford ashamed of you!"

Like lightning Tom Worth turned upon him.

"Trust me for that, my friend!" he exclaimed. "I will stand my trial, and, mark me, I shall be acquitted! And yet, to that end, God will have to assist me! But, Ben, your time is fast passing away. I wish to say a few words to you—words of importance."

He paused.

"I am listening, Tom, and will treasure up every word," and the old man drew nearer to his friend.

"Well, Ben," began the other, in a low voice, "there is a piece of rascality afoot in this city, with which it may be that I have become entangled."

He paused.

"What mean you, Tom?" asked the old man.

"Do you know Boyd's Hill?" asked the other, in the same low tone, without heeding old Ben's question.

"Every inch of it! Why?"

"Just back of the cliff, not far from the head of Stephenson street, there is an old house, which I—" his voice sunk so low, that old Ben had to lean over to listen; and then an animated, earnest conversation ensued between the friends.

When this consultation—we might term it—ended, old Ben sat for a moment, without speaking, and then rising to his feet, said in a deep, determined voice:

"Trust me, Tom; I will watch well. And—"

Just then, faintly and indistinctly, were heard heavy footsteps approaching—this time, as before, confused.

The footfalls paused before the cell of Tom Worth; the key grated in the lock; the bar rattled down, and the door was opened.

"Your time is up, sir," said the jailer to old Ben; "but, Tom," addressing the prisoner, "I have brought you more company."

For a moment the two miners stood, hand clasped in hand, and then old Ben, with a half-sigh, turned abruptly and left the room.

The jailer immediately closed and locked the door, and walked away.

The cell was now very gloomy, almost dark, and Tom Worth, as he turned to his new visitor, did not recognize him.

He was a tall, portly man, with a long silver-white beard, covering his face entirely. The man was clad in large, loosely-fitting garments—evidently, by their peculiar cut, of common material.

"Well, sir," said the miner, a little harshly, "what business have you with me? the hour is late."

"What business? That's good!" said the other, straightening himself up, with dignity.

As he heard the voice of the visitor, the miner started as if shot through the heart.

"Mr. Harley! you here?" he exclaimed.

"Yes, yes, my man, I am here; but, for God's sake, do not speak so loud! I do not wish my name known. Don't you see that I am in disguise?"

"Yes, truly, I do see it!" said the miner, slowly; "and again I ask, what business have you in my cell? I am a prisoner now, sir."

"Tom Worth, I have heard your voice before; 'tis strangely familiar."

"You have heard it, sir, in your library and in the alderman's office. But speak, sir."

"Well, then, Tom, guilty or not guilty of abducting my daughter—poor child!—I am sure you know something of her whereabouts."

"Upon what do you base such an opinion, sir?" asked the other, as a frown came over his face.

"Upon what you hinted at in my library. And now, I am here with gold—a large amount—to buy your secret; to—"

"Enough, old man!" suddenly cried the miner, his tall form dilating, and towering to a greater height than ever; "enough, or you'll craze me! You refused to hear my suspicions, they were nothing more; you mocked and insulted me when I was in the grasp of the law; you believed me guilty of this dastardly act, when, God knows, I would have died for your daughter; and now, sir, you sneak in here, under cover of night, and hidden in a disguise, afraid that you will taint your name! Come here to buy from me my secret! No, sir! I hold no secret from you or from any man, and in the court-room, when the day comes, I shall have justice! As for your gold—bah! I despise it, as I condemn and spit upon you for your own cringing conduct! You have my answer, and—I prefer to be alone!"

Five minutes afterward old Richard Harley, wretched, chopfallen and miserable, emerged from the rear door of the jail—slunk down into Grant street, and when just below the Cathedral, entered his carriage, there awaiting him, and was driven rapidly over the river.

CHAPTER XX.

DARK DEEDS.

GRACE HARLEY, with bated breath, sunk back on the sofa, as the door slowly opened. She gave a quick, covert glance thitherward, as the raw night wind crept in; and though, at such an hour, she could expect no other, yet she started convulsively as the loathsome villain who had ensnared her appeared. His bearded face, the wide, drooping slouch hat, drawn over the dark

brow, yet permitting the fiery eyes beneath to burn and flash out—the long coarse overcoat, concealing all shape to his person—all betokened the same unwelcome visitor—the same unprincipled scoundrel whose purpose was now fully apparent.

Grace Harley was a bold and determined girl, when driven to desperation; her danger now was that she had been driven almost beyond despair, and was likely to succumb from the very subsidence of despair.

As the man quickly entered, and closed the door behind him, he approached her. But in an instant she sprang to her feet, thrust her hand in her bosom, causing the newspaper nestled there to rattle—and drew forth a keen, flashing dagger.

"Stand back, villain!" she exclaimed, raising the blade high in the air, in her nervous grip: "I have cast aside the spike since I have found this better weapon—this, perhaps an evidence of other crimes of yours—and I'll die—Stand back, I say!" and her eyes gleamed with a look of determination.

The man recoiled violently, as he saw the bright, keen blade glitter in the full blaze of the chandelier, and, coward-like, his own hand sought the heavy butt of a pistol protruding from his overcoat pocket. Advancing a stride, he half drew the weapon from his pocket. The knife, however, awed him, and he paused.

"Villain that you are!" exclaimed the maiden, "draw your pistol and murder a defenseless woman! Death at any time is preferable to confinement here, and I doubt not you can play the rôle of murderer well; 'tis only a degree beyond what you already have done."

Half frenzied, the man drew the pistol from his pocket, but almost instantly let it drop again. As he did so, the girl caught a glimpse of his ungloved hand, and she saw a glittering jewel flash for an instant from that hand. Grace crouched against the wall; a shudder shook her form; a deathly pallor took possession of her already wan cheek.

But the man knew not the cause of this sudden change, nor did he care for it.

"You need not be alarmed, Grace Harley!" he said, in a harsh voice; "I do not come to annoy you to-night. I am here only for a few moments on business. Besides, my sweet one, I have other and more important work on my hands. But"—and he advanced toward her again—"you must be blindfolded. I wish to consult some papers here, and look into some matters which it were well you should not see. I must do it!" and he continued to advance.

"Stand back, sir!" exclaimed the girl. "I'll die before your polluted hands shall touch me!"

"Can you not believe me when I swear to you that I will not harm you? There, I cast my pistol from me!" and he tossed the weapon on the center-table behind him. "Now let me place the bandage over your eyes."

"Never! never! so help me God!" and the girl still opposed to him a bold, unflinching front.

The man's eyes glittered fire; his hands gripped together fiercely, and a furious oath of anger burst from his lips.

"Then, by Jove! I'll shoot you through the arm, and bind you by force, for you shall be blindfolded!"

As he spoke, he snatched the pistol, cocked it, and was about to aim.

For a moment the girl stood firm, unmoved; then, as a faint trembling came over her, she said, in a low, half-appealing voice:

"No! no! If you shoot me at all, let it be through the heart. I will apply the bandage to my eyes until you yourself are satisfied. Only give me your pistol that I may be safe against treachery."

The man hesitated.

"If you will swear solemnly by heaven and hell," at length he said, coarsely, "that you will not take an undue advantage—that you will again, at the proper time, place the pistol in my hand, and that you will not remove the bandage until I am gone, I will do as you say."

Thought after thought passed like lightning through the young girl's bosom. Were she to accede to those terms, she might place herself irretrievably in the power of the villain; if she refused to accede to those conditions, he might proceed to violence—the result of which she would not trust herself, even for a moment, to contemplate.

She saw, too, by the man's manner, that, beyond a doubt, he was in a hurry, and that he was, to a certain extent, telling the truth.

She concluded to accept his terms, as he had acquiesced in hers.

"It shall be as you say," she at length murmured, in a low tone; "and, right or wrong, I'll trust you this time."

The man seemed somewhat softened, for he replied in a more conciliatory tone:

"You shall not be deceived; but hurry, and—here is the pistol!"

As he spoke, he advanced, and placed the deadly firearm in her hands.

The girl slipped the weapon, with its cold steel barrel, into her warm, palpitating bosom, and then, without a moment's hesitation, unwound the thick shawl from her shoulders, and

folding it in several plaits, covered her eyes with it effectually. Then, drawing the pistol from her bosom, she sat down composedly upon the sofa.

"Tis all right," said the man. "Now turn your face to the north—that is, to your left hand. So!" he said, as the girl obeyed him, unhesitatingly.

For several moments there was a silence in the room. Naught but the roaring wind without, sounding ominous and preternaturally clear, could be heard.

The man turned toward the further side of the room, and, as if "to make assurance doubly sure," he drew a screen between him and the girl, who sat motionless on the sofa. But he allowed the gas to stream on as ever.

He drew near a low sideboard, opened it, and took therefrom a cut-glass decanter. He waited not for a tumbler or goblet, but placed the vessel to his mouth and drank deeply. Then he replaced the bottle, locked the sideboard and rose to his feet.

"Now—now!" he muttered to himself, "I am strong—and—look—nay, I must look at my King of Terrors, and prove to him that I am king—not he!"

He approached the wall as before, found the concealed spring, and pressed on it.

The section of the wall sunk obediently—slowly—slowly, and then the ghastly sight came into view.

A half-cry almost burst from the man as he gazed at the glistening skeleton lying there so quietly—so awfully! Then he sought and found the other spring, and aided the wall in regaining its position as before.

Without more ado, he turned, hurled the screen to one side, and walked up to the maiden.

"Give me the pistol, Grace Harley," he said, in a low, quavering voice; "then wait until you hear the door shut. Then you are at liberty to remove the bandage."

The girl obediently held the weapon out toward him. For a moment he gazed at her sitting so motionless, so trustingly, then turning abruptly, left the room.

Grace, hearing the heavy bolt of the lock slide into its socket, removed the bandage. But no unusual sight met her eye.

Ten minutes, fifteen, twenty, a half-hour passed, and Grace still sat where her strange visitor had left her. She glanced around the room to see if the man had left any trace, telling of what he had been doing.

But everything was in order; nothing was disturbed. The chairs were in their usual places, the sofa and center-table also. The pictures on the wall—Ha! the wall!

What was that ominous-looking crevice on the side opposite her? She had never noticed it before. It was a narrow seam, about half an inch in width, extending six feet across the wall, at right angles. Below and above this seam the rich velvet paper showed its cut edge. Singular!

The girl rose to her feet, and, with awe and trembling, drew near the mysterious crevice.

Grace paused as she neared the fissure, and glanced tremblingly around her. Summoning her courage, she suddenly drew a chair to the wall, mounted it, and peered into the narrow aperture. She could discover nothing, could determine nothing, save that there was a black, cavernous depth inside the place, and that there issued therefrom a foul, musty odor. The girl drew back; her limbs were tottering under her, but, resting a moment, her courage and determination returned.

She drew the dagger from her bosom, and placing it in the crevice, bore her weight, gently at first, upon it—then with more force.

The wall yielded slowly—slowly—the cavernous opening enlarged. The maiden paused, and peered in; still, nothing could be discerned.

The wind roared wildly without, and belated hoarsely down the tall chimney.

The girl pressed her hand on the wall, while, with the other, she still bore down with the dagger. Suddenly, from some impulse, the section shot rapidly up into its place—there was a creaking, as of chains and pulleys. The section closed with a sharp, clicking sound, and the dagger, broken in twain by the blow, fell to the floor.

With a wild cry of terror, the maiden reeled backward, slipped from the chair, and dropped like lead upon the rich carpet of the apartment.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE POWER OF GOLD.

LONG hours passed before Grace Harley recovered from the terrible shock she had experienced at beholding the startling secret in the wall. It was certainly some time after day next morning when she knew herself again; for she could hear the far-off rumbles of the city betokening the resumption of business. Now and then, too, she could see faint flashes of sunlight struggling through the door-cracks.

The truth is, that, so benumbing was the shock which the girl had sustained, she had passed from a state of temporary unconscious-

ness to a deep, unbroken quiet of a settled slumber. She had slept the long night through on the floor where she had fallen.

She awoke with a start, and gazed about her for a moment, ere she could recognize her position, for, since her detention in the old house, she always slept on the sofa, at the southernmost side of the apartment. Gradually she recalled the circumstances of the previous evening, and then, like lightning, she felt in her bosom. A smile of satisfaction flitted over her pallid face, as the concealed newspaper crumpled and rattled under her hand. She arose, and taking the paper from its hiding-place, drew her chair directly beneath the chandelier, the jets in which were still burning brightly.

Seating herself hastily, she spread out the paper, and hunted through it for the paragraph which, on the evening before, had arrested her attention.

The paper was the *Gazette*, and it was dated two days after the night of the adventure on the heights of Mount Washington.

The girl gave a quick start as the particular lines soon again caught her eye. Then in a low, hesitating voice she read aloud:

"THE ABDUCTION CASE.—In our issue of yesterday we referred to the high-handed outrage, perpetrated in our very midst—the abduction of Miss Harley, only child of Richard Harley, Esq., of Alleghany City. Since then, considerable light has been thrown upon the dark transaction. The evidence elicited before Alderman March, yesterday afternoon, seems to fix the guilt—or at least a goodly portion of it—on Tom Worth, the miner, employed in the famous Black Diamond Mine. On an investigation of the circumstances, this man does not prove to be the hero he was first thought to be. It appears that he was absent from his work and his cabin, without a satisfactory reason, for some time, both before and after the abduction, and the plain, straightforward evidence of Mr. Markley—a tollkeeper on the Smithfield street bridge—seems, beyond a doubt, to fasten the guilt upon the miner.

"This man, Tom Worth, strange to say, has borne a high character for honesty and sobriety, and was well vouched for by our friend, Mr. Hayhurst, the overseer of the mine, and pertinaciously so by an old man, named Ben Walford, a fellow-workman in the Black Diamond. The devotion of the old man to his guilty friend, the prisoner, was very touching; it was worthy of a nobler subject. Too much commendation, in regard to the solution of this affair, cannot be awarded to our gifted young townsman, Fairleigh Somerville, Esq.; it was owing to his efforts and untiring diligence that the arrest of the offender was effected. Another strange feature of the case is, that the prisoner, though offered bail, refused it peremptorily! Thus far he declines to admit that he was implicated in the matter, or that he knows anything of the whereabouts of the young lady. However, he is safely lodged in jail to await his trial, when it is to be hoped that, if found guilty of this cowardly crime, he will have meted out to him a punishment suited to his deserts.

"In the mean time the sympathies of the community are with the bereaved father, who is almost crushed beneath the heavy misfortune."

The paper fell from the girl's hands, and Grace Harley's head sunk on her bosom.

"God in heaven!" she murmured. "Can my terrible suspicions be correct? Can it be he—the deep-dyed villain! Poor, poor papa! and I know I cannot be far away from him; and yet, I know not. Tom Worth! and that noble form, so like—My God! a wild hope—nay, nay! and, if it were! Alas! alas! A bright hope—good heavens!—yea—yea—my watch—yes—I have it here—and—God be with me! I'll try! Ben Walford, his friend? Oh, he cannot be guilty, and yet, how can I communicate with him? God aid and help me! Do I see light ahead, and—'Sh! sh! here he comes—my jailer. He is kind to me; be brave, my heart!"

The girl crushed the newspaper back into her bosom, and retreated hastily to the sofa.

Steps sounded without; a key grated harshly in the lock; the door opened.

A tall, heavy man, his face muffled in a large woolen comforter, his hat drawn lightly over his eyes, entered. In one hand he carried a basket covered with a towel.

"Well, miss," he said, in a kind voice, "how are you, this morning? Hope you're well, ma'am?"

"Thank you, my good man; I am not well." They were the first words she had spoken to him, or he to her.

"Sorry, ma'am; and—I'm goin' to leave you, ma'am."

"To leave me, my good man? What do you mean?" And she looked at him, wonderingly.

"Why, ma'am, to-night will be the last time I'll bring your meals to you."

"Ah! then I am to be released?" she exclaimed, half rising to her feet, as a sudden gleam of hope flashed over her face, and sparkled in her eyes.

The man was softened by that appealing look, but he shook his head sadly.

"No, no, ma'am; some one else will take my place; and then the boss, you know, ma'am."

"Oh! God!" groaned the girl.

"I am very sorry for you, ma'am," said the man, feelingly; "for, ma'am, I have a wife and little ones, and, miss, I wasn't always a bad man!"

The girl looked hastily up at him.

"Tell me, my good man," she suddenly asked,

"why am I kept here? Tell me, for I have never harmed you!"

"What you are here for, ma'am?" exclaimed the man, starting back. "No, no, ma'am; I cannot tell you that!"

A moment of silence ensued, during which time the man busied himself in taking the girl's breakfast from the basket, and placing it upon the center-table.

Grace Harley glanced at him.

"I wish to speak with you, my man," she said, softly; "can you spare a moment?"

The man hesitated.

"Yes, ma'am," at length he said; "I suppose I can."

The girl arose and approached him.

"You say you have a wife and children; I know by your tone that they are dear to you. For their sake, I beg you to do me a small favor."

She paused. The man was listening attentively.

"Furnish me with paper, ink, and envelope, and then promise to drop a letter in the post-office for me," and she looked at him, pleadingly.

"No, no, ma'am! I cannot—I dare not! My life wouldn't be worth a thought! No, no, ma'am! I am willing to serve you, but I dare not do that!"

"You dare not? Then it is fear that hinders you?"

"You are right, ma'am," was the reply.

"Then you shall run no risk; I pledge you my sacred word, as a God-fearing woman, never to hint to any one that you aided me, in case I ever get home."

The man paused.

"Will the letter be to your father?" he asked.

"No," was the prompt reply, and she still gazed at him.

"Let me think, ma'am," said the man, walking slowly up and down the room. "I am going away to-morrow morning, anyway—and he can't suspect me!" These words were spoken as if communing with himself.

He paused before the maiden.

"I don't know, ma'am, but what I might serve you. God knows you are treated badly. I could not help it!" He spoke earnestly.

"Heaven help you, my good man!" said the girl, deeply; "say that you will aid me now—you will get your reward!"

She took him appealingly by the arm. The man still hesitated, but then, turning toward her, said:

"You must promise me, ma'am, before God, that even to your dearest friend you will not hint that I have done this for you. Then tell me who the letter is for, and come what may, I'll accommodate you!"

"God bless you and yours forever, my good man!" murmured the girl, as she sunk back on the sofa.

"Say nothing about that, ma'am, and I'll go out after the paper. But I must be careful."

So saying he drew his woolen scarf more close around his neck. In doing so, it became disengaged, and fell from his shoulder.

The girl caught a glimpse of his face. She started violently.

"Why, good heavens!" she exclaimed; "are you not Tom Worth, the miner?"

The man in his turn started, and hastily rearranged his scarf.

"Me, me, Tom Worth? Why, ma'am, Tom Worth is—but, I can't answer your questions—there! Now I'll go after the paper; I'll soon be back."

He opened the door softly, and putting his head forth, peeped around him. Then he cautiously slipped out and closed the door.

He was gone about half an hour, when Grace, who, in the mean time, had partaken sparingly of the breakfast before her, heard him coming back.

He soon afterward entered and closed the door.

"It's all right, ma'am," he said, as if pleased at his success; "I didn't have to go far. Here's the paper, ink, and all. Please be in a hurry, ma'am, for the boss might come, and then you know—"

"Yes, never fear, my good man," and the maiden seated herself at once by the table, and drew the writing materials toward her. Her hand trembled as she grasped the pen.

The man had seated himself at some distance and was engaged in repacking the things in the basket.

Grace wrote rapidly. It was a brief letter. She read it over twice and inclosed it in an envelope. Then she hastily scribbled a few lines on a slip, folded it around the envelope, which was already directed, crowded all into another envelope, and directed it.

"Tis ready," she said, in a tremulous voice. "For the sake of your dear wife and children, I beg you to put this, with your own hands, in the office."

"I'll do it, ma'am," was the prompt reply.

The man took the envelope, and without casting his eyes over the superscription, placed it carefully in the breast-pocket of his coat. He turned, picked up the basket, and was going, when Grace called to him:

"Here, my good man," and she took her

watch from her bosom, and then a few gold coins from her pocket; "take these; 'tis all I can give you now but you shall—"

"No, no, ma'am; I cannot," said the man, firmly, at the same time putting aside the costly present; "it would not be *honest*, ma'am."

"But I beg you to take them," insisted the girl; "take them; I do not value them."

"I cannot take the watch; it would be like stealing, ma'am," said the man; but he hesitated; "I am a poor man—an unfortunate one—and the money will be of service to poor Mary and the children. I'll take it, ma'am, if you are willing."

"I wish there was more of it—there," she said, eagerly forcing the coins into his hand. "But I shall not forget you. Good-by, and God be with you!"

"The same to you, ma'am, and from an honest heart!"

The man emphasized the last word; then he was gone.

A glow of happiness beamed over the maiden's face, and then she muttered:

"Can—oh! can it be done? Suppose I fail? Fail! I must not fail! And then, Ben Walford? Yes, yes, I'll trust him forever! I'll try the experiment now, at once!" she exclaimed.

She cautiously drew near the door, and listened intently for a moment. All was quiet.

She turned at once, and going to a closet in the room, took out a large sheet of tissue-paper, very thin and light. Then, after searching around for a moment, she found a can.

She hastily tore off a piece of the paper, rolled it between her hands, loosely, in the shape of a ball; then, from the can, she sprinkled on it a few drops of the liquid it contained. Lighting the paper-ball by a match, she cast it all ablaze up the chimney, and awaited breathlessly the result.

The flaming ball darted up, lightning-like, in the strong draught, and it did not return—not even the faintest cinder.

"Thank God!" muttered the girl, fervently; "it will do; Heaven has come to my aid!"

CHAPTER XXII.

THE FORCED OATH.

THE day passed rapidly away; there was sunshine in Grace Harley's heart, and happiness on her face. The roses were blooming again on her cheeks, and, as she walked with nervous steps the narrow limits of the room, there was an elasticity in her gait, telling unmistakably of a renewed spirit. She marked not the speeding hours, and was almost heedless of the utter seclusion which held her unwillingly aloof from the world.

Noon came and passed; the dusky twilight settled down, and the last rays of the sun had ceased to penetrate through the crevices of the door, or shimmer down the narrow flue of the chimney.

Night had come, and with it terror for Grace Harley. This was *his* night; she expected him; he had told her so, and this hideous man had never broken his word.

A shade of intense anxiety spread over the face of the helpless girl. Slowly she felt in her bosom, as a look of wild determination, in thrilling contrast with the late expression of happiness and joy, spread over her face. She started, as her hand sought in vain—started as if shot—her lips became pallid, and the blood flowed away from her cheeks. The dagger she had recently possessed herself of, *was not there*, and then, like lightning, the dark wall secret came back to her memory. On that very day she herself had cast the bladeless handle of the dagger in the rubbish of the closet. And the sharp spike—that was also gone! She was defenseless and alone!

Scarcely breathing, the maiden cast her eyes about her, but nothing presented itself. Slowly she realized her terrible position. Alone, in a far-distant house—with walls impenetrable almost to sound—herself entirely helpless, and in the power of a strong and desperate villain.

The light of hope died away entirely from her eyes, and despair reigned in her bosom, as she leaned back, fainting, on the sofa.

The minutes—the hours—flew by; the clock, on its rich, gilded pedestal of alabaster, above the mantel, pointed to ten o'clock.

The high wind of the preceding night had subsided, and everything was wondrous still and subdued on the desolate hill.

Suddenly the girl raised herself, for heavy footsteps, which she had so well learned to know, broke on the silence of the night. They approached the door; the key again grated in the lock, and then the tall form of the loathsome wretch appeared. He entered—this horrible man—closed the door unsteadily, but securely, and staggered across the room. The apartment was at once filled with the disgusting odor of a drunken man's breath.

The poor girl shrunk shudderingly away, and her fluttering, trembling heart scarcely beat in her bosom.

"Ha! ha! my pretty flower! I've waited long enough on your obstinacy! Decide to-night! I wait no longer!" cried the fellow, in a harsh, unsteady voice, as, balancing himself

by the table, he leered at her horribly, then lurched blindly toward her.

"Back, monster, back!" she screamed, springing to her feet and confronting him.

"Back? Ay, thus, Grace Harley!" and at one bound he threw himself violently upon her. "You shall give me the wedding promise to-night, or, by Heaven, I'll strangle you!"

"Oh, pity me! pity me! For God's sake—for your mother's sake!—for—"

"Shut up!" exclaimed the man, fiercely, at the same time covering her mouth with his hand.

The struggle was fearful between the frail girl and the strong drunken man.

Suddenly, by an effort, she broke from him.

As she did so, she tore away the roll of handkerchief which covered his neck, and with it came away, too, *en masse*, the long black beard which concealed his face. The maiden retreated rapidly to the sofa and sprang behind it for protection.

"God in Heaven! Is it YOU, then?" she exclaimed, scorn and indignation taking the place of fear; "and you would have me wed such a scoundrel as you?"

The man, half-sobered at this untoward circumstance, started confusedly back. But he recovered himself.

"Yes! Grace Harley, it is I; and, by heavens, you shall know it to your sorrow. You have discovered me, but, mark me well, you are in my power yet! Now I shall leave you, but *shall return*—return, to conquer or destroy!"

As he spoke he drew a pistol, cocked it, and advanced upon her.

"Back, base-hearted villain, or advance and stain your hands with a woman's blood!"

And the maiden's stature seemed to grow with her grand and swelling indignation.

"No, no, Grace Harley!" sneered the man, ominously; "I'll not stain my hands with your blood; you are *valuable* to me; you have piles of gold; you shall be my greatest conquest, and I cannot, *will not* let you slip away so readily! But, heed you, my fine girl, unless you swear to me a *TERRIBLE* oath—one you dare not break—I'll spatter your brain on that wall! That oath is, that you will not, if you ever leave this house, expose me by word, or sign, or hint!"

And his eyes glittered wildly.

The man was now thoroughly sobered, and his eyes glared with a desperate gleam of determination. With a sudden bound he cleared the sofa, clutched the girl with a grip of iron, and placed the cold muzzle of the pistol-barrel to her temple.

The maiden shuddered; death never was so near to her. She felt the creaking of the trigger as the man pressed it with unsteady finger. She had her life before her; she had a father; and she had the *memory of one dearer than a father!* She would live!

"I'll swear," she said, in a low, almost inaudible voice.

"'Tis very well!" said the man, in a hoarse voice, "and the penalty of this oath broken is the *instant death of your father!* Look to it that you keep that oath!"

As he spoke he hurled her aside, strode to the door, opened it and went out, closing it securely behind him.

"May the devil seize her and her gold, now!" he exclaimed, fiendishly. "Let her rot there! And I must see Teddy at once; and then—may the fiend curse me for my bad luck! I must leave for other parts!"

Saying this, and emphasizing the words with a horrid oath, he hurried away.

CHAPTER XXIII.

LETTERS FOR TOM WORTH.

Two days had passed since the terrible events recorded in the preceding chapter.

Tom Worth was striding moodily up and down the confined limits of his cell. There was more than usual gloom upon his brow.

The anxious, doubting shade we have before noticed had become more marked, and the prisoner's bold front of conscious innocence had changed. An unmistakable sign of foreboding now showed in every lineament of his face.

Edward Markley's testimony was a mountain in his way, and the miner knew that, unaided and alone, he could not set aside that testimony—that, whatever he might say in refutation, while having its due weight and entitled to its proper credence, would not be sufficient to negative the toll-keeper's plain, honest evidence.

Up and down the damp cell the miner strode. The close confinement, the bad air, the habitual dampness of the prison room, already had told on the iron man. His cheek was a trifle blanched, his eyes somewhat dimmed. An air of listlessness and languor showed, as of a man on the verge of coming illness, that he was succumbing.

Yet his was still a hardy frame, and the noble muscles under his jacket-sleeve told of a wondrous vital force there yet, and in abundance.

Suddenly he paused and peered up at the narrow, grated window above him.

For several moments the prisoner gazed fixed-

ly at that narrow aperture; then he slowly scanned the extent of the cold, damp wall lying between the floor and that small, heavily-grated window.

He shook his head; it was twelve feet at least from the window to the floor, and he had nothing on which to climb up thither, even were he so inclined.

It may be, indeed, that Tom Worth was thinking of making some desperate effort at escape. Yet that were strange, if true, when it is remembered that he positively refused bail—refused it too, because he was afraid, *so he said*, that if he accepted it, it would look as if he—in part at least—admitted his guilt.

Nevertheless, as the miner for a moment gazed at the window, through which scanty beams of the outer bustling world struggled, a half-hopeful, half-joyous light came into his eyes. Yet, too, as he measured the height of the cold, damp wall with his eye, the light died away.

With a sigh he turned to resume his promenade, but he paused again, as he heard the far-away rattle of the gate opening into the corridor, on which was situated his cell.

Steps were approaching; they paused at his cell; the door was opened and the jailer, putting in his head, said:

"A friend to see you, Tom, for half an hour."

And, half-pushing old Ben Walford inside, the turnkey closed the door, locked it, and hurried away.

For a moment old Ben stood still—now looking at his friend, anon bending his ear to catch the faraway faint footfalls of the jailer.

There was a half-mysterious, quizzical and triumphant look on the old man's face as he drew near his friend, clasped him in his arms, and said, in a low tone:

"God bless you, Tom! but I've fooled the jailer *this time!* He searched me; but, Tom, my boy, he didn't find anything! Ha! ha! Nevertheless, Tom, I've brought you something."

Without saying more, old Ben pulled off his overcoat and threw it on the bed; then he laid aside his thick woolen working-jacket, and then his vest followed. Tom Worth looked wonderingly on.

"What the deuce do you mean, Ben?" he asked, as a smile came to his face. "Have you smuggled me my pipe?"

Old Ben did not answer at first, but, creeping to the heavy iron door, he listened intently for a minute. There was no sound without—not even an echo.

"No, my boy, I did not bring your pipe; but—well, I'll show you in a moment."

He took out his pocket-knife, and, hastily ripping up the back lining of his vest, drew out, with an air of satisfaction from their secure hiding-place, two letters. He handed them at once to the prisoner.

"Both for you, Tom. One came yesterday morning—the foreign one, Tom—and the other was sent in an envelope directed to me at the Black Diamond. Inside that envelope was your letter and a few words on a strip of paper, telling me if I '*valued life*' to give you the letter '*with my own hands*,' and, by the eternal pillars! I've done it, my boy. And, my boy," he continued, casting his eyes up at the small streak of daylight glancing through the narrow window, "you had better read the letters while you have light; one of them, anyway, must be important."

The young man took the letters with a trembling hand, for the word "foreign" used by old Ben had sent a thrill through his frame and the warm blood to his face.

He took the letters in his hand, and then, fearfully, he turned his head away; he was *afraid* to look upon the envelopes. Old Ben stared at him wonderingly.

"What is it, Tom, my boy? Read the letters; they may contain news of importance."

"Yes, yes, Ben; I'll read them."

He turned suddenly and glanced over the envelopes. The effect was marvelous. The miner started violently back, gasped for breath, and sunk forward on the small bed.

"My God!" he muttered, in a deep, almost anguished tone.

"Read the letters, my boy; the daylight is going," said old Ben, in a low voice, creeping closer to his friend.

But it was fully five minutes before Tom Worth summoned up resolution and courage to tear open the envelope of one of the letters.

This was directed to him in a large, bold, distinct handwriting, and bore a foreign stamp and postmark.

The miner slowly drew out the folded sheet, and, spreading it out, commenced to read. As he did so, a note fell out.

We cannot attempt to describe the wondrous change and play of expression that came and went, like flashes of lightning, over the half-bronzed, half-pale face of the prisoner.

He read on.

It was a letter of moderate length, and was clearly written; yet several moments elapsed before Tom Worth, with a half-cry of exultation, folded the sheet again and replaced it with the note in the envelope.

"My God! my God! thy ways are inscrutable!"

For ten minutes he sat and gazed at the stone floor, seemingly oblivious of the presence of his friend. His thoughts were wandering far away, and a look as of holy triumph, either already accomplished or in his grasp, grew over his bearded face.

"Tom, my boy," suggested old Ben, "there's another letter; read it, for the daylight is almost gone."

The prisoner started, cast a look of gratitude at the old man, and said:

"Yes, Ben, my dear friend; I have not forgotten; and, Ben, bend your ear closer, and let me tell you—I *must be gone!*"

He said the last words in a deep whisper.

Old Ben gazed with amazement at his friend, over whom so wondrous a change had suddenly come. But he replied:

"Of course, my boy; and by the eternal pillars! say the word, and you shall go at *any time!* I know—"

"Enough, Ben; and now I'll read the other letter. Good heavens! I had not noticed it! *Her writing!* Wait, Ben, and expect news!"

He tore open the envelope, snatched the faintly-traced half-sheet from within, and at a glance had read it.

"Thank God! thank God!" he murmured; "and she—an angel in Heaven not purer—exonerates me! God stand by her and me! Now, at last, daylight appears, and—"

Rising, he strode several times up and down the room—old Ben, almost aghast with wonderment, watching him the while. Again, and this time almost defiantly, he cast his burning eyes up at the grated half-window so high above him.

"*My only chance!*" he muttered, "and it shall not fail me! I'll go! I'll right this wrong, right myself, and then I'll be gone!"

"Ben," he said, in a low voice, "the last letter concerns *you*. Nay, speak not. It concerns you only in this way—*work* in the cause of humanity is expected of you."

"And was I ever backward, Tom, when such work was needed?" and the old man trembled with the infectious excitement. "What is it? Speak, my boy, and count on me!" he continued, laying his large, brawny hand on his "boy's" shoulder, as if to add force to his words.

But Tom Worth did not reply at once; he was again glancing at the grated window above him and measuring the damp, oozy wall with his eye.

"Ben," at length he said, in the same low tone, tremulous with excitement—the excitement of hope, "Ben, are your muscles in good condition? Can you, as of old, bend a two-inch iron bar with a blow of your fist? Can you now lift a thousand pounds, dead-weight, with your shoulders?"

And he still kept his eyes on the grated window.

"Ay! *Try* me, my boy! I can do more—yes, by the eternal pillars! I can, even as child's play, tear out that iron grating up there!"

As he spoke these words significantly he bent his sinewy right arm until the gorgeously swelling muscles of that arm burst asunder the binding jacket-sleeve and glowed with a dull white luster in the gloom of the cell.

"Tis all right! I believe you, Ben," said the young man, in the same low tone, with an air of satisfaction; "but, Ben, from that window to the floor is twelve feet."

"You are right, Tom, and a two-inch manila rope can be bought for ten cents, long enough to reach that distance and strong enough to bear an ox," was the significant reply.

"Tis very good, Ben; you understand me well. Then, there is work for *both of us*. Listen well, Ben, for time flies, and your half-hour is almost gone. Listen, and let not your left ear hear what I say to the right!"

Then ensued a rapid, earnest conversation in an undertone during which old Ben never stirred muscle or uttered a word in denial or objection.

The jailer's steps were heard coming. Old Ben sprang to his feet.

"It shall be done, my boy! God is in it, and we cannot fail! The right-hand tower of the Cathedral will do, and, my boy, we'll work together."

"Time's up, sir!" called the jailer.

"Yes, sir, right away," replied the old miner, buttoning his coat. "Good-by, Tom. Pleasant dreams, and a good sleep! and, maybe, we'll see one another to-morrow."

With that he went out, and Tom Worth was again alone.

CHAPTER XXIV. THE RED LIGHTS.

THE shades of a dark, misty, disagreeable night had fallen upon the city. The lamps had long since been lit. The streets were being rapidly deserted, and the flaming shop-windows were going out into darkness one by one.

It was eleven o'clock.

Striding rapidly yet stealthily along by the Union Depot at this late hour, two tall men took

their way up an unfrequented street leading to the hill beyond.

They seemed to be anxious to avoid the flaming reflectors, for they drew their hats more closely over their eyes and their large coats more snugly up around their ears.

They were soon hid, however, in the friendly gloom of an alley, and at length entered Bedford avenue. Turning at once to the left, they began the ascent of that steep thoroughfare.

"Walk up, Teddy; come closer! I want to speak a few final words with you."

"Yes, boss, I am here," said the man, panting from exhaustion.

"I have seen a strange shape, Teddy, hanging around *my* cabin, of late," said the first speaker. "I saw it last night for the third time, and I am not mistaken. It was a heavy, stalwart man. He did not see me, yet it was evident he was watching round the house. Here let us stop; we are far enough," he said, suddenly; "I am blown, too."

They seated themselves on a large stone post thrown by the roadside.

"And I, too, boss, for we have come at a slashing stride. I am willing to rest, especially as you say there is still work before us to-night."

"Yes, Teddy, there *is* work! The house, I am sure, is suspected and watched—why, and by whom I do not know. The girl must be removed; you and I must do it, and do it *quietly*; and then, before the dawn of day, the furniture must be brought away. Have the carriage ready by half-past one o'clock. There will be no prowlers then. By a smart drive to the 'Shinley'—for it is there I shall take her—you see I can return soon and get the wagon. I'll help you, and one load will take all. The truth is, Teddy, we are in a scrape."

"We, boss? Why, I—"

"Yes, *we*, for you are implicated as much as I am—more so, too; and so it would seem in a court of justice!"

The other made no reply; he acquiesced quietly in the decision of his companion.

"I'll do my part, boss," at length he said; "but I hope you'll pay me to-night, sir, for you say you'll be gone for awhile."

"Do you not trust me, Teddy? However, 'tis nothing; it shall be as you say. Meet me on the hill at half-past one—that is, one hour and a half from this time. You can conceal the carriage in the hollow to the left of the street, you know; you have done so before. Meet me then, and I will pay you. And now be off, for you have no time to lose. I will hurry home and fix up a few things."

The men at once separated—one returning down the avenue, the other striking across the lower end of Cliff Hill toward the Alleghany River.

We will return for a brief season to the cell of Tom Worth.

When old Ben had gone, the prisoner arose, and, approaching the grating above him, drew the letters out from his bosom and perused them leisurely again. Then he glanced about him. He rapidly gathered together all the papers which he had written from time to time since he had been in prison. He tore them to fragments, bit by bit, and flung them under the mattress. Then he gathered up the few articles of wearing apparel he had with him, and put them on one by one.

Seating himself so as to front the grated window, he stretched his limbs out lazily, and, letting his head fall upon his breast, seemed to court slumber.

One of those singular letters we cannot now lay before the reader—we mean the letter bearing on its envelope a foreign stamp. But the other, the briefer one, ran thus:

"MY DEAR FRIEND, for such I know you to be:—I have learned all! I *know* you are innocent of the crime of which you were charged, as you were bold and fearless in saving me that terrible night from certain destruction! Merest chance has given me an opportunity to write to you. God in his mercy grant that the chance will prove availing! I know you have a staunch friend in Ben Walford; from what I have read of him, I *know* he can be trusted. I am kept as a prisoner in a house on a high hill and within the city limits. Where, I cannot exactly say. Tell your friend, the old miner, to go to some eminence and watch all around him to-morrow night—watch in every direction—and let the hour be half-past one o'clock. At that hour, if he keeps his eyes well about him, he will see some flaming balls of red light floating on the air *somewhere*. Let him mark well the spot and hasten hither, for I am *there!* The rest I leave to him. I can write no more. I long to be free, that *you* may be. God bless you, as my preserver!"

GRACE HARLEY."

The night grew on; the darkness became more intense.

Tom Worth still sat with his head bowed on his breast; his heavy, regular breathing showed that he was sleeping soundly.

Twelve o'clock rung out.

Suddenly, and before the vibrations from the neighboring clanging bells had ceased to thrill in the air, Tom started in his chair. A distant, faint, *ticking* sound caught his ear; it came from the grated window above.

The prisoner slowly arose and gave a faint whistle. It was answered immediately from above. Then the young man stood silently awaiting.

He could distinctly hear the heavy, labored breathing, as of a strong man doing work which taxed his strength to the utmost. With bated breath he waited.

Suddenly the loose rubbish and mortar from above rolled down into the cell and a cold gust of wind blew in.

The grated window was entirely removed!

A moment after a stout hempen cord was cast noiselessly down into the cell through the open window. The prisoner clutched it as a drowning man grasps a slender straw.

"Haul away, Ben!" he said, in a low, excited, but determined voice.

The rope at once tautened; then came the terrible strain, as the prisoner's full weight bore like lead on the creaking cord. But that cord was faithful.

Up—up—the window was reached. In an instant the prisoner felt his shoulders clutched in a giant's grasp; then he was slowly drawn through the aperture.

A moment more and he stood on the hard ground without, locked in a vise-like embrace against the brawny breast of Old Ben Walford.

But they lost no time. They turned at once, walked a few rods, sprung over the iron railing lightly, and stood in the street, now silent and deserted.

They crossed Fifth avenue, and when they had reached the somber shadow of the towering Cathedral they paused.

"Here's the place," said the old miner, in a low tone; "and, my boy, 'tis a giddy climb outside of the steeple on that light scaffolding. Thank God that is there! It's an awful risky business on such a night as this. Yet the top of that steeple is the only place that will serve us; it is high enough."

"Yes, Ben; and we *must* climb it, come what may!"

"Then come, Tom; we've no time, for I must get a carriage yet. 'Tis now not very far from one o'clock, and we must not hesitate."

The old man spoke in a low, excited, but decided voice.

Nothing further was said. The two men passed softly around the inclosure to the left of the Cathedral—that is, down Grand street, and leaping over the fence groped their way beneath the overhanging scaffolding which led up even to the summit of the giddy spire.

They reached the first scaffolding, and searching about found another ladder leading higher. The other staging was reached; another ladder found; and thus, on and on, upward and upward, the two friends climbed higher and higher.

The sharp steeple was growing more tapering and slender moment by moment; and now, as the men paused for breath, it seemed that they could girdle it in their arms.

Glancing upward—there in the uncertain gloom just above them towered the cross!

A sickening feeling crept over Tom Worth, and he dared not glance below. He cowered down on the narrow staging that swung and rocked under the wind which at this great altitude blew and sung so madly; and with closed eyes and almost suspended breath he clung on with a nervous grasp to the swaying boards, which alone held him from destruction.

Not a word was spoken for several minutes. At length old Ben said, in a low voice:

"A ticklish place this, Tom! Hold on tight! We can see the top of Mount Washington from here!"

"Can you see the top of Boyd's Hill?" asked the other, in a low breath, without opening his eyes.

He dared not trust himself as yet to look once, despite the gloom surrounding him.

"Easily, and the very top," was old Ben's reply.

"Then watch in *that* direction, for, unless I am wondrously mistaken, we will see that way what we seek."

Then ensued a long silence.

The time sped swiftly by, and still the old man watched. One o'clock had sounded, and Tom Worth had at last dared to look around him. He was painfully excited.

Slowly glide the minutes one by one, and then suddenly the half-hour stroke pealed loud and clear from a neighboring belfry.

The men strained their eyes around them, but—yes! almost before the echo of the clock-bell ceased to quiver on the dead, sleeping air, a red light, as of a ball of flame, small and quickly fleeting, flashed out in the night, far away, apparently on the distant horizon. Then another, and another, and another still! And then all was darkness.

"She has kept her word!" said Tom Worth, "and I was *NOT* mistaken! We must hurry, Ben, for Boyd's Hill is more than a step from here!"

So saying, Tom Worth slid along the plank to the end, swung himself around the upright scantling which held the scaffold, reached the friendly ladder, and commenced the descent. Old Ben followed close behind him.

Staging after staging was passed, and at last the two men stood at the bottom. In a minute more they were in the street, and, without pausing, hurried away.

CHAPTER XXV.

MEETINGS AND PARTINGS.

"Ha, boss! did you see those lights?"

"Yes, Teddy, and, by Jove! I am sure they come from my cabin! Come, come! Something is wrong there. Let us draw nearer and see what all this means."

And he started forward.

"We had better stay here, boss. They may be ghosts. This is the hour for them to be abroad."

The man spoke seriously and hung back.

"Ghosts! Come on, fool, and none of your nonsense. Tie the horses to the old post there and follow me. We have no time to lose, for there's work ahead of us between this and day."

The other man still hesitated, but only for a moment. He turned, and taking the horses by the bit forced them to back the carriage a few feet. He then tied the reins to a post, the sole remains of a fence that had once skirted this portion of the hill.

The men at once left the little hollow in which they stood and, entering the deserted Stephenson street, pushed on up toward Boyd's Hill.

Further down the same deserted thoroughfare, toward its foot, two other men strode along at a rapid pace. They were tall, brawny fellows, and they, too, bent their stride up the hill. They walked swiftly, as if they knew every inch of the ground well, and as if they, too, had work before them.

"We are near the spot, Ben, and I long to be there! If we are successful it will be a grand triumph for me; if we are wrong! if we fail! Yet, we cannot, must not fail! 'Twould craze me now, after everything has worked so well; but, Ben, it was bad you did not succeed in getting the carriage."

"Yes, my boy; but, maybe 'tis for the best. The liveryman, had his stable been open, would have wondered why I, old Ben, the miner, wanted a carriage. Take my word for it, Tom, 'tis ordered to be so, and, as I said, 'tis all for the best; I know it."

"Perhaps it is," replied the other, as if half-convinced. "But, Ben, should we succeed in rescuing the young lady, what will we do? 'Tis not a mere step from here to Stockton avenue, in Alleghany City. And, late or not, I wish to teach the old aristocrat there that an honest poor man can prove his innocence, and I'll do it!"

"You shall do it, Tom, for, if it can't be arranged otherwise, why, by the eternal pillars! we'll carry the young lady ourselves. In such work as that I can get along under a thousand-weight again; and she, poor girl, I dare say, is as light as a sparrow. Besides, Tom, you have an arm on you, and it is no child's, either! We can manage all this; but, did you think, Tom, that we haven't found the young lady yet? God grant we may!"

"Amen!" replied Tom Worth, in a deep, earnest voice.

They redoubled their exertions and strode on at a rapid stride up the hill.

Again several minutes passed in silence. Suddenly Tom Worth halted.

"Hist! hist! Ben! there is a carriage—see! just there in the hollow?"

"Yes, my boy, I see it, and we have company on the hill! We have work, too, Tom—that's a sure thing! And," he continued, in a very low, but determined voice, "rascality is the game! We'll see who gets the carriage!"

"Have you any weapon, Ben?" asked the other.

"None but my stout arms; they are enough. Woe be unto the man who braves me!"

"Then come, Ben—Ha! by heavens! you are right; the villains are at work! Voices, Ben—voices! and now for vengeance!"

And, as a long, wailing shriek, evidently from a female throat, sounded shrill and piercing on the still night-air, the two friends rushed forward toward the top of the hill. A moment only elapsed before they stood on the summit, and not over twenty yards from the old house.

Before them, indistinctly in the gloom, a struggle was going on. And then the coarse voice of an angry, excited man pealed out in a hideous oath—and a low, wailing cry for mercy went feebly up.

"Now, old friend, into them!" shouted Tom Worth, in a voice that was stentorian in its power.

Old Ben needed no encouragement. With the bound of a tiger he sprung forward by the side of his young companion, who was fairly flying onward. A moment, and like an avalanche they swept upon their assailants; in another, heavy thuds of falling fists, sickening and terrible, sounded on the air; then the fierce breathing and the half-muttered curses of struggling men; then a pistol-shot, and another, all told that a terrible contest was in progress.

But nothing could stand up against those two

iron-made men of the mines, with their muscles of steel.

The pistol-shots had been harmless, and one of the men, his face knocked into a shapeless mass, had gone down before the ponderous blows of old Ben's right arm.

For a moment there was a brief hand-to-hand struggle between Tom Worth and the other villain. It was indeed brief, for that young man was a very Hercules in the fight. In the twinkling of an eye he had sent his antagonist rushing and tumbling on the stony surface of the top of the hill.

The two strong men stooped simultaneously by the side of the fallen girl lying so motionless on the ground. Quickly they chafed her cold hands and temples and sought to raise her.

The girl did not seem to breathe.

"My God! my God! they have slain her! they have murdered my darling!"

Old Ben started as if shot as he heard these words burst in a wailing sob from the breast of Tom Worth.

"No, no, Tom!" he said, in a low, sympathizing tone, "she still breathes, and—Ah! there they go, the hounds, and they have escaped us!" he suddenly exclaimed, springing to his feet and pointing with his hand.

Sure enough, the villains who had for a while been placed *hors de combat*, had slowly and unperceived regained their feet, and were now rapidly speeding away.

"Come, Tom," said Ben, at length breaking the silence, "all's well; the young woman breathes; ha! she awakes! Assist her, Tom, and make for the carriage in the hollow! I'll go on!"

And he hurried away.

Tom Worth, tenderly lifted that half-conscious form in his strong arms and bore it gently down the hill. He reached the carriage: it was standing in the road, and old Ben Walford, reins in hand, was already upon the driver's seat.

"Get in, Tom; get in with the lady, and let's be off. Those scoundrels may get reinforcements and return."

Tom Worth placed his precious charge inside the vehicle, entered himself and closed the door; then the carriage, under the guidance of the heroic old man on the box, rolled away at a fearful pace.

Down through the city, then over the creaking wire-bridge, then up Federal street, and then, at last, before the mansion of Richard Harley, the millionaire, on Stockton avenue, old Ben drew the reins.

Not a word had been spoken by those inside, though for a brief moment Tom Worth had held the little hand, so cold and limp, in his, and had pressed his lips ardently to it.

The household was aroused, and in a few moments old Mr. Harley, in dressing-gown, wondering and staring, stood at the door. His daughter reeled in and flung her arms around his neck; he uttered a wild, piercing cry.

"Your preserver, Grace! where is he?"

The girl pointed to the tall form of the young miner, who stood in the glare of the light.

"Tom Worth, the miner! My God!"

But then, in an instant, with a glance of unutterable affection toward the maiden, the miner was gone.

The clear sun of the next morning broke grand and luminous.

The beams of that sun flashed into the long-occupied room of Grace Harley, and into the chamber, too, of her old father.

And, not only was there sunshine in the apartments of that lordly mansion, but it glowed in every heart, too. For the lost was found—the daylight of the household once more gleamed in their midst, and happiness was upon all.

Of course the NEWS—as it was called by everybody—spread like wildfire; the heiress of old Richard Harley—the belle of Pittsburg—had been found! Extras were issued from the different newspaper-offices, and the matter so strange and mysterious from the beginning to this the ending, though for a time almost forgotten, was again on every tongue.

Then came the equally startling news that Tom Worth, the prisoner, had broken jail and had escaped. Large rewards were immediately offered for his arrest, and his escape was proclaimed everywhere.

It seemed that the long-neglected grated window had been lifted or torn out bodily from its bed, and that the prisoner had thus escaped. Forthwith, that very day, each window along the jail-wall was removed, and the holes left were filled up with solid granite blocks, as can be seen to this day in the old prison.

But there came no news of Tom Worth, the miner. Many were the congratulations pouring in that day upon the rich man that his daughter had been found. And then enterprising reporters rung respectfully at the aristocratic mansion, and in their own urbane, *pushing* style craved a "half-minute's interview with Miss Harley."

The "interview" was, in every case, cheerfully or otherwise accorded; and to all she had the same news—that very brief and non-sensational, to wit: on the night of terror, on the Mount

Washington road, she was seized by two men, apparently miners, was thrown into a wagon, after being bound and blindfolded, was driven a long distance, and at last imprisoned in an old house, which she had but just learned, stood isolated and alone on Boyd's Hill; that the room in which she was kept was elegantly furnished. And then, with a shudder, she went on rapidly to state that she was released by two brawny men, apparently miners, too.

That was all she had to tell.

The dusky twilight was settling on the place that day when the bell sounded for the fiftieth time at the mansion of Mr. Harley. This time a letter was handed in by an old man who hurried away at once. The letter was directed in a clear, bold handwriting to Miss Grace Harley.

Mr. Harley had strolled forth to the commons to get exercise and relaxation, of both of which he stood in need. Grace was all alone. She started violently as she saw the superscription of the envelope; but tearing open the letter she read it through to the end. When she had finished, she laid the missive by, and sinking softly on the sofa again, she covered her face with her hands and wept silent tears of sorrow and joy commingled, murmuring at the same time:

"Darling! darling! It was he! My heart said so; and now—now—without a word, he has gone! God grant that we may meet again!"

That letter, lying there crushed and crumpled on the sofa, read as follows:

"MY DARLING ONE:—I have but a few moments to write, and these I occupy, darling, in telling you that you are still the cherished idol of my heart—that you and your memory are dearer to me than life itself! I was wrongfully accused, Grace; yet, for fear of erring, I dared not exonerate myself by charging the crime on others *then*. Heaven has aided me in rescuing you from the clutches of a villain. Let both of us thank that God who has so blessed and befriended us. And now, darling Grace, a word more: I have just received a letter from a foreign land, summoning me away; I *must* go. This is not the time for explanations. But, before I go, let me pledge to you again an undying love and fidelity. I'll not forget you, Grace; and I'll win and wed you yet, though the whole world were opposed to me. Be true to me, as I will be to you; wait for my coming, and—shun that man whom I know to be a deep-dyed villain—FAIRLEIGH SOMERVILLE. Be kind, Grace, to my friend, poor old Ben Walford, who is almost crazed at my departure. He is one of nature's noblest of noble-men, and I love him beyond the expression of words. And now, Grace, farewell, but not *forever*! You know me; so the name below will do.

Forever yours,

TOM WORTH."

Late that night a small row-boat shot off stealthily from the levee near the Smithfield street bridge, and took its way rapidly down the current of the Monongahela toward the dusky-flowing Ohio.

In the boat sat Tom Worth and old Ben, and both men pulled the easy-working, noiseless oars. On they sped, miles and miles below the dark city. Then, at last, they turned the head of the boat, and, by a few vigorous strokes, shot the light craft in toward the bank.

The men leaped ashore.

"The time has come, Ben; 'tis best that this parting be soon over; we'll suffer less. Good-by, my dear old friend, and may God always bless you! I am safe now, and the yelping hounds of the law cannot find me. Pray to God, Ben, that we may meet again. And now, once more, good-by!"

The old miner could not speak; he dared not trust his trembling voice, coming up, as it did, from a heart almost breaking. He strained his "boy" to his breast for a minute, as if loth to let him go; and then the old man staggered back into the boat.

When Ben Walford looked again, Tom had disappeared in the gloom of the black forest trees, which fringed the darkly-flowing river.

CHAPTER XXVI.

OLD THINGS, AND A NEW ARRIVAL.

A LONG time has elapsed since the occurrence of the events as given in the last chapter. To tie the broken thread securely, to make our chain of circumstances strong again, it is necessary to go back awhile—some two years and more—to the time of the escape of Tom Worth.

Soon after the disappearance of the miner, the report came that he had been drowned in attempting to get away by the river. Of course this rumor, in due time, reached the ears of Grace Harley. When it did, a terrible convulsion passed over her frame, and, hiding her face in her hands, she gave way silently to a flood of tears. Her father had seen this emotion, and then, as a sudden gleam of intelligence passed over his face, he had taken his daughter's hand tremblingly and tenderly in his, and had spoken sympathizing words in her ear.

After that, when Grace appeared in public, strange to say—and everybody wondered—she wore black.

In the mean time a cloud, at first very small, yet momentarily increasing, was settling over old Richard Harley.

After the escape from jail and disappearance of Tom Worth, for some time nothing was seen of Fairleigh Somerville, Esq. It is true, he

was in the city, but, he did not show himself at the Harley mansion. As the weeks rolled on, however, the young millionaire finally made his appearance, once again, at the aristocratic dwelling on Stockton avenue. He drove over, as usual, in his trotting-wagon, and, hesitating not a moment, walked up the graveled way, and rung the bell. He had been readily admitted by the liveried servant.

And Fairleigh Somerville smiled grimly—satanically—to himself, as once again he stood in the elegant mansion, and as he glanced at the rich, showy livery of the domestic. It was a wicked fire which flashed from his eyes, as he looked a second time at the pompous servant. But, he handed in his perfumed card, and at a sign from the servant entered the parlor.

Fairleigh Somerville was bent on business—deep and important business—though perhaps the observer would have noted nothing from the quiet, smooth, smiling exterior. When his card was handed in that day, a strange, proud smile flitted over the half-sad face of Mr. Harley, and a bright, triumphant fire gleamed in his eye. Poor old man. Despite the lesson he had been recently taught—despite the gloom which of late had overshadowed him and his, he was still ambitious. And, as he gazed at the sharp graven characters, on the bit of cardboard, a wild hope again found place in the father's heart.

He had a marriageable daughter, and Fairleigh Somerville was a very rich young man!

As the visitor, however, was standing by the piano in the parlor, waiting the coming of his host, the door suddenly opened. Somerville turned. He started violently, and his face first paled then reddened as his gaze fell upon Grace Harley. The maiden, too, shook fearfully, and she was about hastening from the room when the man strode fiercely up to her, and bending down, whispered a few words in her ear.

The girl cowered, and without reply soever, turned and tottered from the parlor.

Fairleigh Somerville knew that between him and Grace Harley there was a chasm which could not be bridged—he knew that, in the maiden's heart, she loathed and scorned him; he knew that he could never call her his wife!

The meeting between the old gentleman and his visitor that day was cordial, and the conversation between them, whatever the subject, was long and earnest. It seemed, too, to be confidential, for Mr. Harley drew the curtains, lit the gas, and locked the doors of the parlor.

When the time came for Somerville to leave, and it was late in the evening, he stood for a moment in the parlor by the table, and slowly folded up numerous papers which had been spread out before the gentlemen. Then, as he hesitated, he remarked:

"I am sure of the success of the enterprise, my dear sir, and excuse me, sir, but if you wish, why, I will advance for you. When the entire investment is made up, why, sir, you can then repay me all at once," and he looked the other earnestly in the face.

Mr. Harley hesitated, and a slight shade passed over his brow. He thought for a moment.

The truth is, pecuniary matters had not gone well of late with the old man. He had accumulated a large fortune, but he knew not how to take care of it. His income had been steadily on the decline for some time, and his business affairs were in a condition he disliked to contemplate. He had indorsed for impecunious friends, and, as the reward for his generosity, he was compelled to pay out in several instances very large amounts. The time had passed when Richard Harley could draw a check at random, and be careless of the sum; yet he was a rich man still.

Hence the old man had hesitated at the young man's remark. It was only for a moment, however, for then he looked up and said, frankly:

"You are very kind, sir, and your proffer is gratefully accepted. Keep an account, sir, and we will settle when everything is arranged. I, too, am sanguine of the success of the venture."

When Fairleigh Somerville drove across the Suspension Bridge that night, the flaring lamp flashing in his face revealed a hideous smile of triumph; but with that expression there was one darker still—*revenge!*

And again and again he came; and every time he offered, very cleverly, to advance money in a certain enterprise.

On these visits Somerville never saw Grace Harley, and he never asked for her; he seemed to have forgotten her. The old father thought strangely of this, but he never mentioned it.

But, Grace knew of these visits, and she was sick and sad at heart at their frequency. A heavy weight seemed to be dragging her down.

Still, Somerville came and time was speeding away.

At last, one night, on the occasion of a visit from the young millionaire, the library rung with loud, angry words, though no one on the outside heard those words. Somerville was at last ready for the consummation of his plans—he was pressing the old man for a settlement. Whether or not the speculation had proved a success or an abortion is not known. But, at

all events, Fairleigh Somerville held a paper—a legal instrument—against the poor old man who had so blindly trusted him.

That paper was a lien upon the splendid Harley mansion entire; and, when the gentlemen separated that night, it was with pitiable appeals from the old man, and dark threats, and vengeful, triumphant exultations from his "partner."

Indeed, the cloud was upon Richard Harley, and it gloomed his sky from horizon to zenith.

Thus matters stood at the time we resume our story, when, one afternoon, there descended, unaccompanied by any one, from the late Philadelphia train, at the Union Depot, a tall, aristocratic-looking gentleman.

What was singular about this richly-clad stranger, and what made him most curiously observed by all, was, while his hair and eyebrows were of the richest auburn, his mustache and whiskers, long and curling, were as white as snow.

Yet, for all that, the gentleman was a young-looking man, and very handsome besides. And no one had ever seen him before.

CHAPTER XXVII.

OLD LANDMARKS.

WHEN the new-comer had alighted from the car, he passed quickly through the extensive depot, and, reaching the street, paused a moment and gazed about him. Noticing that several persons were eying him closely, he turned away at once to the Monongahela House omnibus, which was in waiting. Depositing several baggage-checks in the hands of the driver, he wrapped his cloak around him, and shrank away in his seat as if disliking observation.

There were a large number of passengers by this train, and the omnibus was kept waiting for a considerable length of time.

Opposite the stranger, two gentlemen—apparently citizens of the place, and who had evidently gotten in to ride down-town—had just entered and seated themselves. A remark from one of them made the new-comer start, and hastily turn his head. But he instantly checked himself without creating observation, and nestled back still further in his seat. His ears were open, however.

"Yes, you are right," said one of the gentlemen; "tis a strange piece of work."

"Fairleigh Somerville is a wide-awake man," answered he who had first spoken. "He has made his way up rapidly. But I would have never dreamed he held claims against poor old Harley to such an amount."

"Nor I; and is it really true that he has taken possession of the fine mansion this very day?"

"Yes. I was by there this morning. Somerville is a man of the world, and I fear has but little heart. He turned the old man and his daughter out into the street! I saw the girl leading her poor old father off."

"Sorry, indeed; but Mr. Harley was very unwise in his speculations. Where are they now?"

"I don't know exactly, but I think they are in one of his old tenement-houses on the Common."

"Well, strange things often happen!" said the other, after a pause. "Four years ago Richard Harley was reputed one of the wealthiest men in Alleghany City; now, he is worse than bankrupt, if report be true; he is in absolute want!"

"Yes; and the strangest part of the affair is, that the man who has legally, of course, ousted him from the mansion, was, two years ago, a suitor for the hand of poor Grace, and I much fear that, in return for her evident dislike of him, he has wreaked a revenge by involving the old man."

Just then the omnibus, having received its load, rattled off, and the conversation ceased.

The stranger had sat like a statue; he had heard every word.

The hotel was soon reached.

The name written by this conspicuous-looking person on the books at the Monongahela House, and which may still be seen by the curious, was:

"FELIX MORTON."

But the name stood alone; it was not followed by residence. At tea, Mr. Morton descended from his room, partook lightly and hastily of the meal, and, arising from the table, put on his overcoat, and left the hotel. He seemed a little nervous, but no one noticed it.

On leaving the hotel, the gentleman walked down Water street to Wood. He pursued his way along this thoroughfare until he reached Fifth avenue. Turning abruptly down this, and as if thoroughly familiar with the city, he hurried on toward the river. Crossing the Alleghany on the Suspension Bridge, he walked straight on up Federal street, to Stockton avenue. There he paused.

The lamps were now lit, for night had settled down. Feeling in his pocket, the white-bearded, stalwart stranger drew out a letter or a memorandum-slip.

"Tis all right!" he muttered. "I must see if this fearful tale be true! I must go on, for Tom's sake!"

Turning into Stockton avenue, he started forward again. Finally he reached the Harley mansion. He halted at the iron gate; then, suddenly entering, he approached the great hall door to read by the glaring street-lamp, on a new, glittering door-plate, the name:

"FAIRLEIGH SOMERVILLE."

The stranger turned as if to retreat, while a deathly pallor spread over his face.

"My God! so soon!" he muttered. "Then 'tis true! Alas! alas! and yet—"

He paused, and as if impelled by frenzy, faced about again and pulled the bell with a steady hand.

In a moment the door was opened, and a pompous servant in livery stood there.

"Does Mr. Richard Harley live here?"

"Richard Harley! No, indeed," said the domestic, somewhat superciliously; "though he slept here no longer ago than last night!" and the man smiled scornfully.

"Ah! And where, then, does the old gentleman live?" asked the stranger.

"Can't exactly say; we know very little about them; but the old man lives somewhere on Cedar avenue, I think—t'other side of the Common."

"Ah! Yes, and—" he slipped some coins as he spoke into the man's hand, "and is his daughter, Miss Grace Harley, still with her father?"

"Yes, sir; she has nowhere else to go. But, sir," and the man, who had readily unbent his dignity, sunk his voice familiarly, "people do say that the girl is crazy—stark mad, and has been for many a day, all about a venturesome rascal by the name of Tom Worth, a miner that was, who stole her away once, and who, having broke jail, was drowned trying to get away."

"Ah! you surprise me. And—"

But, just then, the tall, slender form of Somerville entered the brilliantly-lit hallway from the supper-room. His face as it showed in the bright light was flushed with a triumphant glow—may-be with wine.

The stranger drew back in the shade, and saying, curtly, "Thank you, my man," turned upon his heel and entered the street again.

An hour from that time, a low but decided rap sounded on the door of old Ben Walford's cabin, over on the cliff. The summons was promptly answered by the old man. When he had opened the door, the tall, aristocratic stranger entered.

Old Ben gazed earnestly and wonderingly at him.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

NEWS FOR OLD BEN.

"DOES Ben Walford live here?" asked the stranger, in a deep voice.

Old Ben still gazed at him.

The lapse of two years had not made much change in the appearance of the old man. The same long iron-gray hair fell over his jacket-collar; the same good-natured, independent look sat on his age-seamed face; the same herculean muscles swelled on his arms as he drew and extended those members in stroking his chin. He was the same honest old Ben, the miner; but a shade of more than usual sadness clouded his face.

He bowed respectfully to the imposing-looking stranger, and said:

"Yes, sir, old Ben Walford lives here, and he is not ashamed of his name—why, I am the man."

A smile spread over the face of the gentleman as he looked full into the honest countenance of the other. Then he suddenly strode forward, and, much to the old man's astonishment, caught his hard, horny hand in his own soft but firm grip.

"Then, my dear sir," he exclaimed, "I am glad to see you. I feel like I have known you for years."

"Me, sir? Asking your pardon, sir, I am only a miner—a poor man—but, thus far, an honest one. And, sir, never to my knowledge have I seen your face before."

But the old miner took the proffered hand honestly and cordially.

"That may be, my good sir," replied the stranger, smiling; "but I have heard your name so often on the lips of one well known—in fact, very dear—to me, and from him, so much that was good and noble of you, that I feel like I know you. My name is Morton, Felix Morton, and, sir, I—"

"Glad to see you, Mr. Morton; and, though wondering, of course, yet, sir, who was it that spoke so well of old Ben?" and the old man gazed his visitor keenly in the face.

The stranger hesitated, and cast his eyes down ere he spoke. A slight tremor passed over his frame; but, when he raised his head again, his eyes were bright and his voice steady as he said:

"Why, you knew him well; his name—Tom Worth, and—"

"TOM WORTH! You bring me news, sir?" and old Ben started as if stricken with a rifle-ball. "And, sir, what of Tom Worth? What tidings of 'my boy,' as I always called him? God bless him!"

The old miner dashed a quick, unbidden tear from his eye.

Sudden as a lightning-stroke, a moisture dimmed the large, lustrous orbs of the stranger, and he turned his head hastily aside.

"Come, come in, Mr. Morton; I forgot myself, sir, at the mention of Tom's name. Come in, sir; though my cabin is an humble place for such as you," and he glanced at his guest again, "yet, if you know Tom, sir, you *must* be a good man, and one not ashamed of honest poor folks, for such was my boy."

The stranger walked in at once, and seated himself on one of the rude chairs of the cabin.

"Thank you kindly," he said. "I promised Tom to call and see you. He sent several messages by me to Pittsburgh—among them one to you, and here I am. I only arrived two hours since."

"May God bless you, sir, for your kindness! And was Tom well, sir? Was he still mindful of old Ben? And where was he, sir, when he gave you the message for me?"

The stranger started, but, after a moment's hesitation, replied:

"Tom was well, and always spoke of you with the warmest affection. When I saw him, some months ago, he was far away from this! But Tom has been fortunate, since he was here."

"Fortunate? And how, sir? I know he had good luck in some things, but to what do you refer?"

"He has had a good deal of money left him," replied the stranger, quietly, glancing at the old man.

"I'm glad, indeed, to hear it, sir," said Ben, promptly; "for if ever man deserved the smiles of heaven, Tom Worth was that man! To tell you the truth, Mr. Morton," and he drew his chair confidentially toward the richly-clad gentleman, "there was something strange about Tom—that boy of mine. He was wonderful book-learned, sir, and though he had thews of steel and muscles of iron, and a fist that could shiver an inch-thick oak plank, yet that hand, though he worked in the mine, was always so white, so fine, so like a *gentleman's*, sir, that I often thought, though I didn't say it, that Tom was not exactly what he seemed to be. And then, Mr. Morton, Tom was so gentle, so respectful, sir, to the women. And I tell you, sir, that such a man is a *true* man, and one as don't forget he has had a mother, sir."

The stranger listened intently, his eyes fixed on the old man's face—those eyes wet still.

"You speak words of wisdom, my friend," he said in a low voice, one deeply enthusiastic from emotion, "and you are right—such men are true men."

"Yes, Mr. Morton; and Tom Worth was one of them! And then, too, in a rough-and-tumble, my stars, sir! he was a perfect lion, and— But do you know his story, sir? He had a little trouble hereabouts!"

The old man spoke cautiously.

"Yes," replied the stranger; "I know Tom Worth's story, every word, and I know, too, that Tom was innocent."

"Innocent? Of course he was! And he would be a brave man, as I have said more than once, who would contradict me! Though—though—truth be told, for a long time, Tom himself would not say whether or not he was."

"Perhaps he had his reasons," suggested Mr. Morton, softly.

"Of course, sir, of course!" was the reply. "That was Tom! Reasons for everything, and good ones! God be thanked that I have heard from him again!"

A silence of some minutes ensued, the stranger bending his head in thought, old Ben sitting with his eyes half-closed, a pleasant smile spreading over his countenance as his mind, doubtless, was traveling back over the past. The old man was thinking of Tom Worth, and the other was thinking of—what?

Suddenly the old man broke the silence by saying:

"You have brought me news, Mr. Morton—good, glorious news for me, and the same for another!" and he glanced familiarly at the stranger, as if courting a confidence.

Mr. Morton started; his face flushed slightly, and his mustached lip trembled. But he asked, quietly:

"What do you mean, Mr. Walford?"

"Why, sir, there can be no harm in telling you, for you are Tom's friend. Why, sir, Tom was a handsome lad, and he had, truth be told, a wondrous way with the women. And, sir—why Tom was in love, and in love with a rich man's daughter."

The old man paused.

Mr. Morton drew still nearer to the miner, his gaze fixed upon him earnestly, expectantly.

"Well, Mr. Walford?"

"And, sir, the girl—God bless her for a noble woman—loved Tom more than any plain, blunt words of mine can tell you, sir. And she would have married Tom in spite of everything had my boy stayed; but, poor thing—"

Again the old man paused.

Mr. Morton was now showing signs of excitement. He placed his hand upon the old man's arm, and said, in a deep whisper:

"Yes, yes, Mr. Walford; what of this poor

girl, who loved the humble Tom Worth of those days?"

"Why, sir, poor thing, she has almost grieved herself to death after him. In spite of all I could say and swear to her, she believes Tom is dead—was drowned, sir. Why—would you believe it—she has been wearing black for Tom these two years past! Don't that show love, sir? Again I say, may God bless that woman!"

"Amen!" echoed Mr. Morton, and a tear dimmed his eye; nor did the turning of his head conceal his emotion from old Ben.

"And now, sir, the other part of your good news," said the miner, softly, "is that I can tell Miss Grace positively that Tom is *not* dead, and that, perhaps, nay, I *know* it, sir! that, though he is rich now, yet he is true to her still!"

"Ay, my friend! True to the death!" said the stranger, somewhat vehemently—so much so, indeed, that old Ben glanced at him quickly.

"But," continued Mr. Morton, as he saw the effect of his words, "it will not do *now* to tell the—this young lady of me. We will wait; I have my reasons."

"Of course, sir, of course. And I am so glad to hear from Tom; I'd almost be willing to die without ever seeing old England if my eyes could fall on Tom. God grant it."

"You may see him yet, Mr. Walford, who knows?" said the stranger, quickly. "But," he continued, as if recollecting himself, "I have with me a letter from Tom for you. Here it is," and he drew it from his pocket and handed it over.

The old man took it with an air almost reverential; fondled it for a moment in his large hands, and gazed affectionately at the superscription.

"Yes, 'tis from Tom!" he muttered; "I know his writing—so clear, so strong and fine, like printing! But, sir, my old eyes are dim; read that letter for me. I would not miss a single word for ten dollars in gold! Read it, sir, for me. If you are a friend of Tom Worth, and I believe you are, there can be no secrets in it from you. Read it, Mr. Morton; for, though your beard is white, your eyes—I know it—are younger and sharper than mine."

The stranger started at these words, and a smile flashed over his face; but, he took the letter, opened it, and spread out the sheet. As he did so, several bank-notes fell down. The stranger quietly picked them up and laid them on the table.

The old miner looked at the money, and then bowed his head.

"I will read Tom's letter, if you are ready," said Mr. Morton, after a pause, in a low voice.

"Read, read on, sir," and the old man did not raise his head.

After another moment's hesitation, the stranger read in a steady, but subdued voice, as follows:

"DEAR BEN:—"

"God be thanked that I can write to you again, and tell you that I have not forgotten you! Though many long months have rolled by since we parted on the banks of the river, yet, Ben, you are dear to me still. I have undergone much since I last saw you—ay, suffered much, but through all I have remembered you, the only *true* friend I ever had! I am far away now, Ben—far away from you and our dear old cabin on the hillside where you and your 'boy' have passed so many happy, *honest* hours together—"

The stranger's voice wavered; old Ben's giant frame shook like an aspen leaf.

"And, Ben, it may be," resumed the stranger, reading from the letter, "that we will never more meet there. If such should be God's will, bow to it, Ben, and pray with me, that we may meet in the bright hereafter. I have inclosed to you, Ben, notes to the value of one hundred pounds—the money of your native land—old England, so dear to you. I can afford it. Take it, Ben; it comes a free gift from one who loves you more tenderly than words can tell. Good-by, Ben—I cannot say *forever*; but, should it be decreed that we meet no more on earth, do your whole part as a God-fearing man to meet me in the better land. May God bless you!"

"Tom."

For five minutes there was a complete silence; and then, as if fearing to speak, the old miner slowly raised his tear-bedewed face.

"I'll do it, Tom! I'll do it!" he whispered, in a deep tone, as if addressing the shade of his absent friend. "Trust me, Tom, for, with God's help, I will do it—will do *all*, *anything* to meet you again, my noble boy!"

He took the notes, pressed them silently to his lips, and placed them away in his bosom, as if they were souvenirs too sacred to place elsewhere.

The stranger's bosom heaved; his own stalwart frame shook; a pearly tear dropped down, and then another, and another, on his long white beard. He laid the open letter on the table, and rising, turned without a word to the door.

Suddenly, however, quick as lightning, he faced the old man, and as he raised his tall form, his chest rising and falling tumultuously, he cried aloud:

"BEN!"

One wild, startled look, a convulsive gasping, and the old man reeled and fell forward, his

brawny arms, now nerveless, clutching the other passionately around the neck.

"God be praised!" was all old Ben could say, as he drew the form of the richly-clad stranger to his bosom, and held him there in a giant's grasp.

CHAPTER XXIX.

BREAD CAST UPON THE WATERS.

THE sun had been up for an hour the next morning, when the tall, aristocratic Mr. Morton went forth from the humble cabin of the miner. And when he left it was in company with old Ben, who blithely took his way toward the "Black Diamond," where he was still a valuable hand.

The stranger did not in the least seem ashamed of old Ben's humble, grimy miner's suit, nor of the plain, unpretending appearance of the hard-working old man. They conversed earnestly and socially together, until they reached the Mount Washington road. Here Ben struck across the hillside toward the mines, and Mr. Morton hurried on down the road, in the direction of the Smithfield street bridge.

When the stranger reached the foot of the road and stood on the abutment of the bridge, he paused a moment, and glanced up at the towering precipice of the coal hills. His eyes wandered about restlessly for a few seconds; but, finally they settled on the black, cavernous opening of a mine. Just then a brawny figure stood by that far-away hole, but in a moment more had disappeared within the black depths.

Mr. Morton sighed gently, and then, almost instantly, a proud, triumphant smile flashed over his features. But the smile passed off, too, and a serious, determined look settled on his fine face. Seeing, however, that he was attracting considerable attention from passers-by, he hurriedly turned about, and strode on over the bridge toward the city.

Just before he reached his hotel, at the further end of the bridge, he muttered, in an abstracted manner:

"Very strange! wondrous strange! These mutations in fortune! Stranger still that these two characters should play *roles* in this mysterious drama! 'Tis difficult to forget past events. There's foul-play, double-dealing, rascality somewhere! It may be well to investigate the matter; something curious may be brought to light, for the man is a scoundrel, if one walks the earth!"

With these strange words, Mr. Morton passed on and entered the Monongahela House—no one paying any special heed to him.

This same day, after some searching about, which he did in a carriage and very leisurely, Mr. Morton engaged an elegant suite of rooms in a private house on Penn street, and had his numerous articles of baggage sent hither from the hotel. The stranger seemed to court privacy.

The conversation which was held the night before between old Ben and his visitor was prolonged until far into the small hours.

"Ayant the twal!"

And that conversation, though carried on in a low tone, was unflagging and earnest. In the course of it several names familiar to the readers of this story were mentioned more than once.

At last, however, when the conference was closed, the stranger unceremoniously threw himself upon Ben's bed and was soon wrapt in profound slumber.

'Tis needless, here, to detail the conversation of that night of surprise and joy to old Ben—joy that once again he had heard from Tom Worth, his "boy."

We cannot wonder, then, after keeping such late hours, however good his company, that Mr. Morton looked somewhat haggard this morning, as he hurried into his hotel.

The day passed slowly away. After having had his baggage transferred to his room in Penn street, Mr. Morton occupied the time in writing, reading, and then in overhauling several of his trunks.

With old Ben Walford the hours had flown swiftly, merrily away. He seemed like a new man, did this old miner, and those around him in the shafts and dark galleries of the underground world noticed his changed demeanor, and paused more than once to hearken to his bold snatches of song, which now and then rung through the pit.

Old Ben was happy.

Why should he not be? He had heard from Tom, and his "boy" had sent him a large sum of money!

And then, too, Ben had the promise of another early visit from the white-whiskered Mr. Morton, to whom it was evident the old miner had taken a wondrous liking.

Night had once more fallen upon the city and its suburbs. The raw autumn wind was blowing lustily, betokening by its chilly breath the early coming of the winter. A racing squadron of leaden clouds was flying across the sky, and no moon or stars, save at long intervals, mirrored their silvery images in the bosom of the broad rivers hurrying by the dark city.

It was the night after the arrival of the mys-

terious stranger—the night after Fairleigh Somerville's induction as owner into the princely mansion on Stockton avenue—the night after Richard Harley was led away from the lordly dwelling, lately his, to an humble home on Cedar avenue—led away by his dove-eyed, sad-faced daughter in black.

The hour was ten, and in this sober, staid little suburb of Pittsburgh—Alleghany City—the lamp-lighters were already extinguishing the gas in the streets; for, in this exemplary borough, lone in certain localities, the citizens had long since retired for the night, and there was no need of light.

The gas-lamps along the quiet, unpretending Cedar avenue had ceased to fling out their glimmer for over an hour. But in one small, humble house on this retired street there beamed forth a light. It came from a curtainless window on the first floor of the little tenement.

Two figures, both brawny and athletic, crept cautiously along the lonely avenue. They paused once or twice to look around them, but only for a moment.

"I must—I must be satisfied!" muttered one of the men. "I cannot sleep until I have found their abode."

"Yes, yes, sir; I know your feelings, and—Ha! 'sh! 'sh! There, sir! there!" and the other sunk his voice to a whisper, even lower than that in which they had been conversing.

The first speaker paused and glanced across the street, in the direction his companion had pointed. He started as if shot, and trembling in every limb, sunk back against the fencing which skirted the Common. But he gazed again.

Just opposite from these two men was the curtainless window, aglow with light, to which we have referred. Standing in the broad flash, which sparkled from the window, was a tall, stately maiden, with a sad visage, her hair falling in disarray—her eyes red with weeping, her arms gently clasping an old man round the neck—the old man leaning motionless over the back of a chair.

In an instant, however, the maiden released her arms from the old man's neck, and going to the window flung up the sash and drew the shutters hastily to.

The tall man without, who had staggered back against the friendly railing, slowly straightened up and whispered:

"Come, my friend; I now have seen! We must be gone."

The two hurried swiftly away from the spot toward the black-bosomed river. As they passed a single solitary lamp, left burning, as it were, by an oversight, the rays flashed upon them; but they were gone so quickly that he who came last was only revealed. He was an old man with a giant frame, hard-featured and honest-faced.

They hurried away, and in ten minutes entered a carriage on Federal street and drove off toward the Suspension Bridge.

The day following, about ten o'clock in the morning, an elegant carriage drew up in front of a lowly two story house on Cedar avenue, in Alleghany City, and Felix Morton descended from the vehicle.

"Drive to the corner yonder and await me; I will come in a few moments," he said.

"Yes, sir," replied the coachman, obsequiously.

Mr. Morton paused as the carriage drove off, and gazed covertly, half-pityingly at that unpretending tenement, now sheltering one who, in a former day, had boasted of his great wealth.

Just then old Ben Walford, staggering along under a huge basket, rapped at the little side alley. Ben had a holiday this morning from the mine, and a joyous glow was overspreading his face. It may have been that the holiday occasioned this; or, perhaps it was the result of the hundred pounds his absent friend Tom Worth had sent him by this same stranger.

The old man did not seem surprised at seeing Mr. Morton, though it was evident that the latter was startled at the sight of the miner.

"This is my offering, sir," said the old man, in a low voice, smiling sweetly and good-naturedly.

Mr. Morton did not answer; he simply placed his gloved finger upon his lips, and turning at once, walked up the steps and rung the bell.

Old Ben disappeared in the alley, and in a moment a glad, joyous voice—that of a female—was heard welcoming him warmly. Then there was a silence, and then a sob. Then old Ben's honest words were heard, saying sternly:

"Bear up, bear up, Miss Grace! You've friends still, and you see old Ben has found you and he thinks more o' you than ever!"

Mr. Morton's frame shook. But suddenly shambling footsteps were heard within the hall; then the bolt was turned by a feeble hand. The door opened, and poor old Richard Harley, sad and worn, anxious and haggard, clad in dressing-gown and slippers, stood there.

The stranger evidently had need to control himself; but despite his efforts, he shook in every limb, and a yearning, sympathizing look came to his face, as his eyes fell on the ruined ex-iron-merchant. But he managed to force a composure to his face, and self-possession in his manner.

Mr. Harley himself started back as he saw the richly-clad stranger standing there; and, do what he could, a blush of shame came to his cheeks, and then a tear dimmed his eye.

Mr. Morton pretended not to see these traces of emotion, and said, with a bow:

"I presume this is Mr. Richard Harley?"

"Yes, sir, I am he. Walk in, sir. I am poorly established as yet, sir, but—"

"Not a word, Mr. Harley," interrupted the other, hastily. "Excuse me for not entering, sir. I am somewhat pressed for time to-day, and, as I have called on business, I'll be brief, sir."

He paused for a moment, Mr. Harley looking at him all the time with wondering eyes.

"My name is Felix Morton, sir," continued the stranger, hastily. "I have been empowered by a friend of mine—a former acquaintance, I believe, of yours, long months since—to hand you this parcel. I have guarded it carefully, sir, and now beg to place it in your hands, and I wish you good-morning, sir."

Mr. Harley took the parcel as one in a dream; but before he could speak Mr. Morton had gone.

The old man shuffled back into the room, and sunk in a seat. As soon as he could recover himself he tore open, with trembling fingers, the stout package or envelope. A sheet of paper fell out. The old man spread it open, and took therefrom several bank-notes.

With amazement showing in every feature—more as if he was dreaming than waking—the old man again spread out the sheet and read the following:

"MY DEAR SIR:—"

"I have not forgotten your kindness to me, long ago, on the East Liberty road, when you took me in and sheltered me. And though I and my fortunes, since then, have been under a cloud, yet I have not ceased to remember you with gratitude, whatever your feelings have been toward me. Remember me—if you can conquer unseemly prejudice—to Grace, and assure her of my unchanging love. I enclose a sum which may serve to show you—though you are a rich man—that I am not lacking in gratitude. May God bless you under all circumstances, and may He bless Grace, too. I send this by a safe hand, and though many miles are before him, he will deliver it safely. You will know who I am when I sign myself
Yours, with gratitude,
"TOM WORTH."

The letter fluttered down, and the old man gazed speechlessly at the four fifty-pound notes which had dropped from the parcel. And then, as a heartfelt prayer of gratitude was going up from his soul, he felt a hand laid gently upon his shoulder.

Grace Harley, as always, clad in black, was standing there, and her eyes were filled with tears—her lips were trembling, and a holy love and joy were filling her bosom.

She had read every line of Tom's letter!

CHAPTER XXX.

A LEGAL DOCUMENT DRAWN AT MIDNIGHT.

It was a dark night, just one week after the occurrences detailed in the previous chapter. But few lights were as yet lit in the streets of Pittsburgh, and over on the black crest of the Coal Hills everything was in absolute gloom.

Though the night was somber and dismal—though the beetling line of the Coal Hills was wrapped in darkness, yet within the cabin of old Ben, the miner, a bright light was burning, brighter than customary.

The old man had company, and company which he evidently prized. The coarse shutters to the single window were closed and bolted, and the common curtain of calico was dropped before the narrow panes. Not a ray from the flaming lamp stole forth to let those outside know that there were wakeful eyes in this humble home of the miner.

Mr. Felix Morton had laid aside his overcoat, and was seated comfortably near the little stove. He was leaning his head slightly forward, and his face was overcast with a shade of deep, anxious thought. With this expression was mingled one of conviction and settled determination.

Opposite to him, his eyes bent intently upon his guest, was old Ben. It was plain that an earnest conversation had been held, and that now the pause was temporary.

"No, Mr. Walford," said the stranger, as if his mind was fully made up, "I am more than ever convinced that a most dastardly wrong has been committed. Ever since, on my arrival, I learned of this singular, this deplorable state of affairs, I have been thinking of the matter, and laying my plans. Fairleigh Somerville is a scoundrel of the deepest dye!"

"I agree with you there, Mr. Morton; but it seems very strange to me—though I am an unlearned man—that old Harley should be so dumb, sir—so unbusiness-like, as to let the fellow take advantage of him. You know, sir, that the old man did make a big fortune, and he must have had judgment and brains to do it."

"That may all be, but I have learned enough to know that Mr. Harley spent money recklessly—that he went security for irresponsible parties—that he lost thousands upon thousands of dollars upon ventures that were mere phantoms. Now, it is not a hard matter to imagine the old man as

anxious to retrieve his fortune—to make his money back, you know."

There was a pause. Old Ben seemed struck with the words of the other.

"You are right, sir, right, as you always are. I see through it now," he said, approvingly.

Then ensued a low conversation, which lasted several moments. At length old Ben said, aloud:

"Exactly; but how about the house, and—"

"I was going on to say, that this fellow, being aware of the financial condition of Mr. Harley, offered to advance the necessary money for the investment—this investment, as I remarked, a fraudulent one. He allowed the matter to go on from time to time, and then finally pushed the old gentleman for a settlement. There being no funds, this man took a lien on the mansion as his security. Do you see?"

"Exactly, Mr. Morton; that is, to a certain extent. But, you know, I am no scholar; and how, if this was a speculation matter, the old merchant couldn't see through it—as no returns, dividends, or whatever you call them, failed to come in?"

Mr. Morton hesitated, but only for a moment.

"With a man like Somerville," he said, "one who has such a smooth tongue and so plausible a manner—we can readily credit him with inventing reasons for anything. You know him of old. But the time will come!" and the stranger smiled grimly, though he continued at once. "You may be satisfied, then, that in this matter he blinded the old man. I am certain I am not far from being right. And I'll probe the matter to the bottom! Justice to more than one shall be done!" and the stranger's eyes flashed as he spoke.

Old Ben glanced at him, pondered for a moment and then said, slowly:

"You are right, Mr. Morton. I see it all plain enough now; and as you say, sir, justice must be done! I haven't forgotten old days and certain deeds! We'll work together, sir!"

"I have reckoned on you all along," said Mr. Morton, quietly, "and the sooner we work, the better."

"I am ready, sir, and waiting," replied old Ben, promptly.

A conversation, carried on in a low breath, ensued, lasting until a late hour in the night. Then Mr. Morton arose.

"It shall be so," he said, decidedly. "The work is hazardous, but we will do it. If we are detected—especially should we be wrong in our surmises—I will not deny but that we run a great risk. But the stake is too great, and the probabilities too much in our favor, for us to withdraw from the venture now."

"You can count on me, sir, in any event in this or any other work." The old miner spoke very decidedly.

Another pause ensued, but the stranger soon broke the silence by saying:

"Be sure to call on Launce to-morrow. I searched him out myself. You can approach him better than I can. I am satisfied that he is an honest man at heart, and has been the dupe of this scoundrel. See him, and—why, you know, if money is needed, call on me. Be ready to-morrow night. I will reconnoiter the premises to-day. If such an evidence is in existence, it must be near his person. But, wherever it may be, we must have it. Good night!"

In another moment, having thrown his overcoat over his shoulders, the stranger opened the door and hurried forth.

When he had gone, old Ben approached the table, and drawing the lamp near him, examined closely the plan of a house rudely sketched on a sheet of paper.

"I can do it, if I am old and stiff!" he muttered. "And I half-way believe Mr. Morton is right. What a wonderful man is this stranger who brought me such good news of my noble boy, Tom!"

Then he extinguished the lamp; and, as a low chuckle escaped his lips, the old man sought his couch.

Another day dawned and passed away, and the shades of night gloomed again over the earth. A cold northeast wind was blowing rudely over the sleeping city; a drizzling, searching rain was falling, and the night was dismal in the extreme.

Long since the streets had been deserted; for, in addition to the cheerless out-door scene, the hour was late. The clock from a neighboring iron-mill had just struck twelve.

Suddenly two figures, well wrapt in long cloaks, emerged from the shadows by the Fort Wayne depot, and took their way toward Stockton avenue. They were soon in this dark street. They paused for a moment and glanced behind them, and then ahead.

"We are near the house," whispered one of the men; "we must be careful. Did you see the man?"

"Yes, sir; he is all right—is an honest man, after all, and wants no money. He is anxious to be free from that villain; but for one week his hands are bound by an oath. He has a high opinion of an oath, sir."

"And I of him, on that account! He shall not lack for a friend when he needs one. But, come; we have work before us. Have your pistol ready. We must deal with villains, if other

arguments fail, with powder and ball, and I solemnly swear that I will know the truth in this matter!"

"You are right, sir, and I am ready," was the quiet response.

Without another word the two walkers strode swiftly, though cautiously, onward. A few moments elapsed when they suddenly paused. They were standing in the shade of the imposing Harley mansion, now the residence of Fairleigh Somerville, the millionaire. The men again glanced cautiously around them. Then the taller of the two gently opened the inner gate, and entered the front yard. His companion followed.

They hesitated not, but took their way noiselessly to the curved archway, leading by an alley, to the rear of the dwelling.

The raw wind still moaned along the streets, and the cold rain pattered ceaselessly down.

The men, bent on such a mysterious errand, soon stood in the yard or court to the rear.

"He sleeps there," whispered one of the men, at the same time pointing to a window of a room on the second story. "An iron hook is below that window-sill; I know it well. Be guarded now, as you value life itself, and cast the ladder!"

The other, silently, and without replying, drew from beneath his cloak a coil of rope knotted with cross pieces so as to form a ladder. He glanced up and measured the distance with his eye. Then, dropping the cloak from his shoulders, he slung the coil slowly around his head several times, and then let fly.

But in an instant the rope rattled down again. Thanks, however, to the sighing wind, and the pattering rain, the ladder gave forth no sound as it fell.

Again the man flung the coil—again it came down; and again and again.

"Toss higher, and more to the right," whispered the other, who seemed to superintend matters.

The man obeyed. This time a half-cry of satisfaction escaped his lips, for the ladder had caught. The man tried it with his hand—then with his full weight. The ladder was firm.

"Let me go first," whispered the taller man, his voice beginning to be tremulous with excitement. As he spoke, he drew from his pocket a small revolving pistol, and placed it in his vest-bosom. Then he secured the long cloak around his waist with a stout cord. He waited no longer, but grasping the side-lines of the slender ladder, swung his feet from the ground, and began the ascent.

In a moment he had reached the window. He gently unhooked the shutters and swung them noiselessly back. Then he tried the window. A joyous cry almost burst from his lips as the sash moved up without a sound under his touch.

Beckoning his companion to follow him, the tall man placed his hands on the window-sill and leaped lightly into the room. Scarcely breathing, and not stirring hand or muscle, he stood still until the other below had flung his cloak again over his shoulders, and, securing it around him, mounted the ladder.

A moment, and he, too, was in the apartment, standing silent and motionless by the side of him who had entered first.

The room was in absolute darkness. The men listened intently. At first they could hear nothing; but after a few moments, the long-drawn, heavy breathing of a sleeping man was borne to their ears.

One of the men took from beneath his coat a dark-lantern, and springing it on, paused. The straight flash of light gleamed out, and in an instant lit up the room. Among other things, it revealed the men who had come on this bold enterprise. But nothing could be seen of them save that their forms were enveloped in long cloaks, and their faces hidden beneath black masks.

The man who held the lantern slowly and cautiously turned the light around. At last its beams fell upon a bed. Lying on that bed was Fairleigh Somerville, locked deep in slumber. The tall man softly approached the sleeper's couch. His feet seemed shod with down—so noiselessly he walked. A moment, and he stood over him who slept so soundly. A wild, violent convulsion swept over his frame, and in a moment he had thrust his right hand into his bosom.

"Villain! your day comes! *Its dawn is breaking!*" said the masked man, in a hoarse whisper, as he turned off toward his companion. "He sleeps soundly," he continued; "we have nothing to fear; we'll to work!"

The men at once drew near the table. On this table were spread papers in wild confusion and disarray. While his companion held the lantern, the other—the taller man—leaned over and set to work to examine the papers hurriedly.

The sleeping man moved not, and naught was heard in the room save the faint rustle of the papers, the sighing of the wind, and the monotonous dropping of the rain.

Suddenly the man paused in his search, and, reeling back, gasped for breath.

Then he slowly pointed to a page in a memorandum-book which he had spread open.

"Read, read, my friend! *Read the truth!* for we have now conquered, indeed!" His voice was hoarse and hissing, yet still guarded, as he spoke.

The other leaned down and glanced at the scribbled lines; but he shook his head.

"Read it for me," he replied, in a cautious whisper, his words short and excited. "You know I am only an uneducated man and no scholar."

His companion drew him down, and in a voice so low that it was scarcely audible, he read:

"This day closes my advances for old Harley. I wonder if he has found out the ruse of the oil well yet? No. He can never find it out! And I now hold his fine mansion, legally, for a loan of sixty thousand dollars! Ha! ha! And, in a week, I'll claim the house or the money. Nice speculation! Ha! ha! ha! and the old fool, nor his white-faced daughter, dream not of my revenge—oh! how sweet!"

The men uttered not a word. The one who had read the entry in the memorandum-book shook violently. The other looked on, and his brawny hands clutched each other viciously. The tall man pondered for a moment, and then whispered:

"We have conquered, and justice shall now be done! *Ay, this hour!* Watch him! If he moves before I am done writing, throttle him! Spare him not!"

He instantly seated himself softly by the table and drew toward him pen and paper. Then he began to write rapidly.

The other at once moved cautiously to the bedside and kept his gaze bent on the man who slept so soundly.

A moment or so elapsed, when he who was writing arose slowly to his feet. On the table lay a half-sheet which he had hastily written over. Without speaking to his companion further than to say:

"Be ready for anything!" he approached the bed at once. Laying his hand on the shoulder of him who slept, he said, hoarsely:

"Awake, Fairleigh Somerville! Awake, I say! *Justice calls you!*"

The sleeper started and sprang upon his elbow. One glance at the two dark-clad masked figures, and he was about to cry out. But, instantly, a pistol-barrel was pressed to his temple, and a hoarse voice said in his ear:

"One cry, Fairleigh Somerville, and by the Lord that judges all things, I'll send a bullet through your brain! Be still and be wise! Now, man, retribution has overtaken you! Here!" and he dragged him fiercely from the bed to the table; "do you recognize that writing?" and he pointed with shaking finger to the entry in the memorandum-book.

Fairleigh Somerville almost sunk to the floor, and his teeth chattered with fright.

"Ay, I see you recognize it! Now, villain," continued the tall man, in a low, freezing tone: "Sign that paper which I have written. Here it is; sign it, and we will witness it!"

"What—what is it?" gasped the man. "A deed of quit-claim and transfer which I have drawn to suit my purpose, of this mansion and the furniture it contains to its rightful owner, old Richard Harley, whom you have so basely defrauded."

"Oh, God! I cannot! I will not!"

"Then, by Heaven, I'll shoot you through the head!" and the tall man clutched him by the throat, and pressed the pistol again to his head. His grasp tightened upon the writhing neck of the other, and his finger was upon the creaking trigger.

"Hold! hold!" stammered the poor wretch. "Release me; take away the pistol and I will sign."

"Good! Now mark me, Somerville: if you are to be found in this house day after to-morrow, you need not hope to escape a righteous vengeance which has been tracking you for years! Swear to me that you will vacate this house to-morrow. Swear at once—or you know the consequences!"

"Yes—yes! I—I—swear!"

"All's well, then. Now affix your name to that sheet of writing, and be quick about it!"

Somerville took the pen held out to him in his trembling grasp, and again glanced over the few clear, bold and unmistakable words which had been so hastily written. He hesitated and turned away: his face paled and wrinkled into a frown. But he felt the eye of the unknown stranger burning into his very soul, through that hideous black mask, and with a desperate gesture and a fearful oath, the baffled man drove the pen rapidly along the line pointed out for his signature. He then shoved the paper toward the one who had thus conquered him.

The man glanced at the signature and muttered:

"All right; now my friend and myself will witness it."

As he spoke, he drew the paper to the other side of the table, and, taking a pen, quickly affixed his name. Motioning to his companion to do the same, he drew to one side.

Whatever might have been his friend's intentions, he was certainly wondrous slow in signing his name. Perhaps it was because his hands were so large and horny. But at last he laid the pen down with a satisfied air.

The tall man took the paper, and folding it up, placed it carefully in his bosom.

"'Tis well, Fairleigh Somerville," he said; "and you may thank your good angel that you have escaped thus lightly. Remember your oath and be wise. Now we will go. Of course you can speak of this if you choose."

"And who—who are you?" gasped Somerville, for he had not seen the signatures.

"Why, look at me, Fairleigh Somerville, and say if you can recall me and my memory now?"

As he spoke, he suddenly hurled his mask aside, and peered in the face of the other.

"My God! my God!" muttered Somerville, and fell to the floor.

Another moment and the tall man, followed by his brawny companion, had disappeared through the window which was still open.

CHAPTER XXXI.

GATHERING THE HARVEST.

BUT Fairleigh Somerville quickly recovered from the shock. He sprang to his feet, struck a match and lit the gas. The brilliant light showed his face distorted by fear and passion; he was foaming at the mouth, and his eyes were bloodshot and staring. He paused not a moment, but hastily slipped on his clothes, and thrusting a revolver in his pocket, hurried from the room.

He took his way noiselessly down-stairs, and snatching an overcoat from the hat-rack, hastened to the front door, unlocked it softly and peered forth. He started back, and half re-entered the house, as he saw, dimly, in the gloom, two tall, brawny figures, indistinct and grotesque, walking rapidly away.

"By heavens!" he muttered. "Fate tells me to follow! and I'll obey. I am entrapped! I am ruined! And yet, *two lucky shots may—*"

The rest of his sentence was lost, as he hastily turned, closed the door softly, and left the house. In a moment he was in the street, and then, hanging close behind those who were ahead of him, he stole onward.

About an hour before day, that same night, the door of old Ben's cabin was suddenly opened, and the light streamed out. In the reflection, standing in the doorway, was the tall form of Felix Morton, the stranger, and just behind him was the brawny figure of old Ben.

A bright glow of triumph shone on the faces of the two men.

"Be sure to meet me in my rooms at the hour appointed, to-morrow evening," said Mr. Morton, loud and unguardedly. "The plan is arranged. I will write the letter in the morning, and I have no doubt of a favorable response. I long to tell the old man the good news in store for him. Poor Grace may yet be happy—if Tom Worth should indeed ever come back! But now, good-night."

"Good-night," said Ben, "and God bless you, my—Mr. Morton!"

But the old man did not at once retire; he stood gazing vacantly in the darkness, after the form of the elegant stranger, who had already disappeared. Then with a low whistle and an ejaculation of satisfaction, the miner reentered his cabin and closed the door.

Scarcely had he gone, when, slowly, from the deep shadow of the house near the little window, a form emerged. The form slowly straightened up.

It was that of a man. He paused for a moment and listened keenly. Then he trod quietly away, until he was out of earshot of the cabin. Then he quickened his pace.

"Furies and fiends!" he muttered, hoarsely, "am I dreaming? Are all the devils in torment leagued against me? Would to God I could overhaul him; but I am too late! Yet—yet—one more effort—one more desperate plunge for revenge, and then I'll be gone from these regions! And now for Launce and Teddy. I'll use them for the last time, and then they—"

The remainder of his words were lost, as he strode on. As he entered upon the Smithfield street bridge, the light shone in his face.

The rays revealed the haggard features of one with whom the reader is acquainted.

But then the man passed on toward the dark, sleeping city.

About ten o'clock the next morning, a letter was handed in at Mr. Harley's abode, in Alleghany City. The old man received the letter himself from the hands of the messenger who brought it. He glanced at the superscription, and then tore open the envelope.

The letter was brief, reading thus:

"MY DEAR SIR:—A week ago I had the honor of placing in your hands a letter with which I had been intrusted. At that time I could not make it convenient to stop over a half-hour with you. Being still, however, in Pittsburg, and having some time at my disposal, I take the liberty of writing to you and telling you I will do myself the pleasure of calling upon you this evening, at eight o'clock exactly, at

which time I hope it may not inconvenience you to receive me. I will, moreover, be able to tell you something of him who sent the letter. Please answer by the bearer. Respectfully, etc.,

FELIX MORTON.

"P. S. I have a little business matter to transact with you, and suggest that you have a friend or so present. Your daughter—I understand you have one—may not object to being a witness to the matter."

F. M."

Mr. Harley read this letter twice, and then calling Grace, showed it to her. The maiden's cheeks paled and then reddened as she read the clear, bold lines.

"I am glad the gentleman is coming, papa," she said; "for his visit may make you more cheerful. And then, oh God! the news of him, now so rich!" and Grace turned softly into the parlor.

"And, my daughter, you shall see this stranger, too; he requests that you should be present," said the old man, kindly.

"If you wish it, papa," was the gentle reply. It was night again.

Felix Morton walked up and down the limits of his splendidly-furnished apartment. There was on his face a well-marked, triumphant look; yet mingled with it was a foreboding anxiety. He had just placed in his pocket a brief letter, which, since its reception that day, he had read over and over again.

"Confound it!" he muttered, "has he forgotten? The hour is late, the time approaching, and he must assist me! Everything else has worked so well!"

He paused and glanced at his watch.

"Only three-quarters of an hour more, and I wouldn't be a minute behind time for—Ha! at last!"

As he spoke, a decided ring sounded on the bell. In a moment or so, after respectfully rapping, old Ben entered the apartment.

"You are late, Ben—Mr. Walford," said the stranger, vexatiously; "but I am glad you are here. You must help me in this matter, you know."

"I had not forgotten, sir; I was coming, of course; and I have business—serious business, with you, my—Mr. Morton."

And the old miner's face was as solemn as were his words.

Mr. Morton started.

"Serious business? Well, quick with it. We have no time to lose."

"Exactly, sir. Well, Mr. Morton, I have just had a visitor at my cabin. The man, Launce, you know, a good fellow and a true comrade, was there; and what do you think he came for? Why, sir, he—" and old Ben sunk his voice to a whisper.

A deep, angry scowl spread over the handsome, white-whiskered face of Mr. Morton, as he heard Ben's news.

"This is serious! The scoundrel is desperate. But it is all so ordered! We must be wary and guarded."

He paused for a moment, as if pondering; but raising his head quickly, he said:

"Hurry around, Mr. Walford, to the police station, and ask the lieutenant for two men. That will do. Tell him enough, but not too much, you know. We can attend to the rest!"

He smiled grimly, as he felt the muscles swelling under his coat-sleeve, and as he glanced at the brawny right arm of old Ben, the miner.

"Hurry, Mr. Walford, and come back at once. I must be dressed for this, my first visit—well and worthily dressed."

The old man, without answering, hurried away. When he returned, which was certainly in ten minutes, Felix Morton, Esq., held in his hands—not loathingly, but tenderly—a queer-looking bundle.

Fifteen minutes from that time two men left the door of the elegant residence on Penn street, and entered a carriage—that of Felix Morton, the aristocrat—standing at the door.

One of these men certainly was old Ben, in his best attire, too; and the other—Well, owing to the glaring of the street lamp just then, a good look at him could not be obtained.

The little parlor of Richard Harley's humble house, on Cedar avenue, was lighted brilliantly—that is, to the extent of two burners. The shutters were closed, and the cheap, though lasting, chintz curtains were dropped to the floor. All was quiet in the room, though the clock on the mantel was somewhat obtrusive with its ominous clicking. The hands of that clock pointed to five minutes to eight.

Gathered in the room, nervous, sedate, anxious and expectant, was a small group. Old Dr. Breeze, the ancient and tried friend of the family, was there, calm, dignified and imperturbable; also, Mr. Harley, restless and excitable.

The most conspicuous figure in the group, however, was Grace Harley. She was clad in pure white, making a wonderful contrast to her accustomed sable attire. A single white rose nestled in her lustrous hair, and her hands—somewhat tremulous—were leaning on a table.

"Tis late, and he comes not," muttered Mr. Harley, vexatiously. "Can he, too, be playing with me? He—"

"Hush, hush, father!" interrupted the daughter. "I am sure the gentleman will come."

At that moment a furious ring at the bell startled all. In a moment a letter was flung into the passage by one who hurried away. Mr. Harley, who had gone out to answer the bell, picked up the letter and returned to the parlor. As he drew near the light he cast his eyes over the superscription. It was his name, and the handwriting was strange.

The old man nervously tore open the letter, and glanced hurriedly over it. All eyes were upon him as he walked unsteadily back into the room, letting the letter fall negligently from his hand. The old man, however, had read every word!

The crumpled sheet fluttered down at the feet of old Dr. Breeze. The physician stooped, picked it up and read it. Then he quietly and without any show of emotion, save a grim smile, placed the letter in his pocket.

The letter ran thus:

"MR. HARLEY:—You no doubt think you are making a fine acquaintance in this Mr. Felix Morton! Be on your guard; he comes with evil intent! He is one known to you as an evil-doer in the past! But those will be here who will unmask him! He will attempt to abduct your daughter! Be wise."

"ONE WHO KNOWS."

"Oh, father! speak—what—what is this?" exclaimed the maiden, springing to the side of her parent, who was leaning against the wall for support.

"Alas! alas! my daughter—we are indeed friendless. This smooth-tongued man is a deceiver—a vil—"

At that moment the heavy rattle of carriage-wheels was heard. Then the noise ceased just by the door. The bell sounded, and, without waiting for the summons to be answered, the door was opened.

Just then the clock struck eight.

Ere its reverberations had ceased, the parlor door swung back, and a strange sight burst upon the vision of the startled group.

There—brawny, iron-armed and independent—came old Ben Walford, clad in holiday attire—a broad, genial smile of greeting and satisfaction mantling his face.

And there—good heavens!—leaning on the old man's shoulder—erect, athletic, muscular, proud and defiant—was TOM WORTH, the miner.

With one wild, snuddering cry of agonizing joy, Grace Harley, forgetful of all maidenly reserve, forgetful of everything, sprung forward and flung her white arms around the neck of the humbly, coarsely-clad miner.

And Tom Worth, in a loud voice, cried in his old familiar tones:

"God be thanked! she's true as steel!" and he bowed his head, with its curling auburn locks, until his long yellow beard fell in masses over the maiden's shining hair.

A moment of silence, painful and awkward; and then, before any one could speak, the street door was burst open with a crash, and three men—one, his face concealed behind a long black beard, his person by a large, ungainly overcoat—sprung into the room.

"There he is—come to light at last! Now on him, my men—we'll see if two can't play at certain games!" and the speaker darted forward.

Quickly placing the fainting girl in the arms of the old physician, who eagerly clasped his charge, Tom Worth turned like a lion at bay. Old Ben Walford, stern, and terrible to look upon, was in an instant by his side.

"Hold! Stand where you are, or advance at your peril!" exclaimed the young miner, in a deep, fearful voice of warning, at the same time drawing a pistol. "Another step, and I'll spatter your brains on these walls! Now—now—the time has come when villainy shall be exposed! I have long prayed for this occasion, and yet I would have spared you! Now—for you have courted your exposure—I will strip your face of its false covering, and declare you the treacherous scoundrel that you are, FAIRLEIGH SOMERVILLE!"

As the young man spoke, he sprung forward with the bound of a tiger.

The two men met in deadly combat; but he who opposed Tom Worth was, before the young miner's brawn and muscle, a very man of straw. In an instant the false beard was torn from his face, and the long overcoat stripped from his form, revealing none less, indeed, than Fairleigh Somerville, the millionaire.

One of the man's companions sprung forward to the rescue, but, quick as lightning, Old Ben, the miner, was upon him. It was but one ponderous blow, and then another, and the fellow went down like a puppet. Springing upon his prostrate foe, Old Ben clutched him by the throat.

The other man—the man we have known as Launce—stirred not; but on his lips was a smile of satisfaction, and of a triumph he had long looked forward to.

"Now, Fairleigh Somerville!" exclaimed Tom Worth, after a pause in this thrilling scene, "your day comes! I gave you a chance and you have repaid my generosity by attempting this dastardly outrage. Nay, move a muscle,

and, right or wrong, I'll shoot you through the heart."

As he spoke, he placed a call to his lips, and blew a long, shrill whistle. Before the thrilling of the pipe had ceased, the door was opened, and two stalwart policemen entered with drawn revolvers.

"Tis over, sergeant; you'll have no trouble," said the young miner, quietly. "Now, Fairleigh Somerville," he continued, amid a complete silence, turning to the unmasked villain again, "I charge you with the abduction, over two years ago, of Miss Harley. I knew your designs at the time; yet I would have given you the benefit of all doubt, for I would, above all things, see justice done! You planned that abduction; these poor men, who by some misfortune fell into your power, were your tools, and executed your plans. From a marked resemblance between myself and that man there, who has at last turned into the right path," and he pointed to Launce, "I was arrested. Hence Morley's evidence. The rascally plan was well arranged. Now, look for yourselves!" and as he spoke he placed himself by the side of the other.

There was immediately a loud exclamation of surprise from all; the resemblance was wonderfully striking.

"I bore all, however," continued the young miner, "that justice, full and final, might be done. And now the hour has arrived when justice SHALL be done! Seize that man, sergeant, but let his tools go free; they were misguided—nothing more."

Without waiting for an expected resistance, the officer, beckoning his assistant on, sprung upon the fellow, enforcing the arrest with his pistol. Fairleigh Somerville ground his teeth together in desperation, and he made a frantic effort to get his pistol, as his eyes flashed fire at the man Launce, but he could not shake off the strong grasp of that brawny policeman! Nay, all his boasted wealth could not now purchase his freedom.

Again Tom Worth turned toward the silent, almost speechless group huddled in the further corner of the room. His tall, muscular form was now shaking with excitement. Addressing Mr. Harley, he said, in a low, deep voice:

"I am Tom Worth, once poor and despised—once spurned and contemned by you! But, as Tom Worth, I now, sir, present to you this paper—a valuable one. I secured it at the pistol's mouth—working in the cause of right—from the villain there, who so infamously defrauded you. That paper gives back to you, sir, your entire property. Take it as a gift from Tom Worth, the miner."

Old Richard Harley took the paper from the young man's hands, glanced over it, and uttering a wild, joyful cry, staggered back against the table.

"And, my friends," and his voice was lower than ever, more subdued, more tremulous, "though you all know me as Tom Worth, do you recognize me now?" and in an instant he cast off his dingy miner's suit, hurled aside the yellow beard, and stood there in splendid array, elegant and stately, as the aristocratic, white-bearded Felix Morton, Esq.

But, waiting not for the amazement of all to subside, he continued, hurriedly and excitedly:

"But this, too, is a disguise! See me now, my friends, in my proper person, and this paper, Mr. Harley, will tell you my name."

He stripped the white whiskers from his face, and a stranger, indeed, stood there—a tall, exceedingly handsome man, far this side the prime of life—a long, sweeping, auburn mustache falling over his mouth.

Old Richard Harley, trembling in every limb, gasping for breath, took the paper in his nervous hands and glanced over it.

"My God! CLARENCE, EARL OF ROY!"

And as Fairleigh Somerville, the prisoner, who had been a dreaming, almost idiotic spectator to the scene, was led out by the policeman, Old Ben, the miner, strode to the side of the newly-discovered nobleman, and quietly, reverentially taking the outstretched hand, said, in a low voice:

"Ay! my Lord of Roy, but—my boy still!"

And then, with a cry of a well-won triumph upon his lips, he whom we have known as Tom Worth sprung forward and clasped to his broad chest the fainting form of Grace Harley, the faithful!

And over the two the poor old father spread his trembling hands in a meaningless blessing.

CHAPTER XXXII.

RETRIBUTION.

WE will not lift the curtain on that last scene—that scene so solemn, so grand, at that hour so holy and hushed, when Clarence of Roy and Grace Harley stood in mute embrace—united after many days! On this scene we ring the curtain down.

We will briefly follow the fortunes of others whom we have introduced to the reader. We have seen how patience, long suffering and love have been rewarded; it were a strange tale—not a natural one, truly—which did not have in its course the recital of merited punishment likewise.

The policemen and their prisoner had reached Suspension Bridge without any incident; but as soon as they set foot on the abutment, Somerville, who had been very quiet, suddenly halted, and by a mighty effort burst from the officer who held him.

Turning at once, he leaped into the street below, and sped away like lightning.

So completely were the officers taken by surprise, that the success of the movement was assured. They fired their pistols, but the bullets whistled harmlessly away. A vigorous pursuit was kept up, though the fugitive was never again in sight.

Late that night—about eleven o'clock—a dark form suddenly appeared in front of the old house on Boyd's Hill. It was that of a tall, slender man. He approached the door with staggering, reeling steps, and opened it.

"Thank God!" he exclaimed, in a husky voice, as he entered and struck a light. "Safe—safe! for a time, at least. Now, one more look at my secret, and then I'll be gone."

As he spoke, he mounted a chair by the wall, wherein was concealed the secret panel. He touched the spring—the section gave way, and then the terrible grinning skeleton, in all its ghastliness, came in view.

The hardened wretch gazed mutely on; then of a sudden, a vague trembling seized his limbs.

Fairleigh Somerville had undergone much that night.

"It was *thus* my crime began!" he muttered, in a hoarse voice. "Ha!" he exclaimed; and he turned suddenly, as the wind, blowing rudely over the hill, flung the door open.

"Unlucky movement! As he turned, his foot slipped on the chair. He tottered, and, in endeavoring to recover his balance, fell backward into the yawning cavity.

The sliding panel, jarred into action by the fall, started to its place with the celerity of lightning. A ringing snap and the solid section had walled him in forever!

CHAPTER XXXIII.

CONCLUSION.

We have but little more to add.

Clarence and Grace were at last married. They cared not to linger longer amid the scenes where their troubles had been so multiplied, and the young bride

eagerly consented to follow her noble husband to his grand old castle of Roy, beyond the seas. Old Richard Harley, too—now contented and happy—was anxious to go likewise. So he at once sold his fine mansion. As his title to it was unassailable, he had no difficulty in effecting a sale.

The very night following that of the marriage, the young nobleman and his loving, trusting wife, with her father, left Pittsburg forever. They went to New York. Old Ben, the miner, glad of the opportunity of getting back to his native England, bade adieu to the "Black Diamond" and his little cabin, and accompanied the party in the employment of Clarence. In one week they sailed for Liverpool.

The tale of Clarence of Roy is briefly told. He was the younger son of a noble family, away in the northwestern part of England. He was his father's favorite, but by his elder brother and stepmother he was hated. These two conspired against him, and managed to bring about a fierce quarrel between him and the hot-tempered old earl, his father. The result was that the young man was forbidden the ancestral castle of Roy, and set adrift in the world without a shilling in his pocket.

He was a proud fellow, and he had gone abroad—working his way—had served in Her Majesty's Indian army—had lived in Calcutta, afterward in Hong Kong, and at last had found his way to the grand asylum for the persecuted—America. Then he had come to Pittsburg. Long before he was known as Tom Worth he and Grace Harley had met under peculiar circumstances—and met to love. But on that period—a dark one to the lovers—it is not our purpose to dwell.

The letter from abroad brought the young man in prison—as the reader will remember—by Old Ben was from the solicitor of the estate of Roy, telling the exiled Clarence of the death of his father—and of the consequent strife between the elder brother and the stepmother. The letter stated that the strife had culminated in a division. Then the elder brother had been suddenly killed in a fox-chase; and then, on certain papers being found, the law had dispossessed the stepmother of all the estates, save a small property as dowry. Hence, the letter went on to say, Clarence—or Tom Worth as *we* best know him—was sole heir to the large property, and, of course, successor to the title.

The solicitor had always been a friend of the disinherited son, and was in cor-

respondence with him in his misfortunes whithersoever his wanderings led him.

The young man, as we have seen, heeded the summons, despite surrounding circumstances. On reaching England, he found a great deal of law matter to be attended to, which, before it was finally settled, consumed over two years' time. This all arranged, however, to his satisfaction, he bent on claiming his long-ago conquest, hastened across the water again as Felix Morton, Esq.—a gentleman of means—to seek out his first and only love.

Ten years have elapsed since the day Clarence and Grace sailed away from New York; and to-day the young nobleman—yes, he is still young—with his sweet wife and prattling children, is happy in his ancient castle of Roy.

Several years since, old Richard Harley died at a ripe old age in the castle, blessing those he left.

Our friend Ben Walford to this day is the trusted steward of the old stronghold, and performs his duties to the satisfaction of all.

Hanging on the wall, in the library of the castle, is a small, richly-gilded frame. It contains simply a half-sheet of note-paper, written closely over. A portion of it reads strangely thus:

"—And the said Fairleigh Somerville hath remised, released and quit-claimed, and by these presents doth remise, release and quit-claim, unto the said Richard Harley, his heirs and assigns forever, all that property known as the Harley Mansion, on Stockton avenue, in the Alleghany City, State of Pennsylvania."

To this sheet of paper appear as witnesses two names, viz., TOM WORTH and BENJAMIN WALFORD.

Only two years since, on tearing down the old house on Boyd's Hill, two grinning skeletons were found in a secret panel of the wall. They were recognized, the one by a golden chain around the rattling ribs, as—ALICE POWERS, once a rival of Somerville in some love affair, and who had mysteriously disappeared years before; the other—by a flashing diamond on the skeleton finger, as—FAIRLEIGH SOMERVILLE.

We must not forget to state that Launce and Teddy were amply provided for by Clarence of Roy, before he left Pittsburg, and that these poor fellows, ever afterward, lived honest, exemplary lives.

Reader, our tale is told, and we have reached the point where we must separate, namely:

Under Sentence of Death;

OR,

THE FAIR FERRET'S FIGHT TO THE FINISH.

BY DR. NOEL DUNBAR.

CHAPTER I.

A SCRAP OF PAPER AND A TRAGEDY.

"I HAVE called to surrender myself to you, sir, upon a charge that will be preferred against me in the morning."

"Of what are you accused?" asked the chief of police, looking fixedly into the handsome face of a stylishly dressed young man, who had appeared before him just as he was leaving his office for the night.

"I have not yet been accused, but will be."

"What will the charge be?"

"Murder!"

"Ah! and who have you murdered?" asked the chief with increasing interest in his visitor.

"No one."

"How then can you be accused if you have murdered no one?" and the chief suspected that in spite of his appearance to the contrary, he had a crank to deal with.

"A case of self-murder has been committed, for a man lies dead in his home; here is his address," and a card with a name and address was handed to the chief.

"It was a case of revengeful suicide—a blow to be struck from the grave at me, that I should hang for his murder. It was diabolically well-conceived, and unless you and your ferrets can prove me guiltless, I will scarcely escape the gallows, as the revengeful man planned it should be."

"My dear sir, your statement is a most remarkable one, indeed! A man commit suicide purposely to convict you of his murder? I never heard of such a monstrous crime. Who are you? I must know all."

"I am an artist; my name is Ormond Dewhurst, and my address is on this card, for there is my studio, my home."

"I know you by reputation, Mr. Dewhurst, and that you are considered a rising artist. I am exceedingly sorry you have become involved in this most peculiar trouble for I can plainly foresee, unless you can furnish full proofs of your innocence of such a serious charge, you are in imminent peril of your life."

"I can furnish no substantial or unquestionable proofs of innocence, or rather, will not do so. The dead man was once my friend, but he died my bitterest foe—my revengeful enemy. This note I received this afternoon from him and I answered it in person."

The chief took the note and read aloud:

"MY DEAR ORMOND:—

"My failing health warns me that the end is not far off, and wishing to die at peace with all the world, I ask you to forgive, forget the past and come and see me to-night, for I will be all alone, my servant having gone to the country on business for me."

"I inclose a key that will admit you; so come to the front room, second floor."

"Believing that you will not refuse my, I may say, dying request, I remain,

"As in the olden time,

"Yours,

"ALLEN GERARD."

"So you answered this letter in person, Mr. Dewhurst?"

"I did, sir, of course."

"Well?"

"I found him apparently a sick man, and, after some conversation, he asked me to go to a certain address and bring back with me a lawyer who dwelt there. I obeyed, as far as the going was concerned, but found not a house in the block named—nothing but vacant lots; and going to a drug-store to consult a Directory, I discovered no such name as the one given me. Returning to the house of Mr. Gerard, and entering with the key as before, feeling sure that he had made a mistake, to my horror I found him lying dead on the floor, a bullet through his brain, a revolver, with one shot missing, near him,

and a note upon the table with these words, as nearly as I can remember:

"'Fool! I never forget or forgive! I die by my own hand, but you will hang as my murderer, and then, though in my grave, I am yet
YOUR NEMESIS.'"

"Where is that note, Mr. Dewhurst?"

"Unfortunately, sir, I left it on the table; but you will find it there, so we will at least have its testimony as against the theory of murder."

"Mr. Dewhurst, upon your own words I must commit you to prison, to await the action of the coroner."

"I expected that, when I came here to surrender myself. I can see, sir, that you discredit my story, that you really regard me as guilty of that heinous crime; but, it is for you to prove my guilt or to establish my innocence; it is for the law to set me free, or to hang me, on circumstantial evidence alone, for the murder of Allen Gerard, for I can here and now assure you that I will do nothing whatever to clear up the mystery of that tragedy. I am your prisoner, sir."

"You are a very remarkable man, Mr. Dewhurst, and force upon me a duty which I must accept—to prove your innocence or to hang you, as the evidence may determine."

Deciding to take his prisoner with him to the house of the dead man, the chief called two officers; a carriage was ordered, and the four were driven rapidly up-town.

It was a pleasant, two-story brick house, with a large yard upon either side, but in a sparsely settled part of the city.

With the key in his possession, Ormond Dewhurst opened the front door; the light in the hall was burning dimly, and the party ascended the stairs to the second floor, front room.

It was a combined library and sitting-room, handsomely furnished, with every evidence that one of cultured taste dwelt there.

And that dweller was lying upon the floor, a dead man, for a bullet wound was in his temple!

Near him was the revolver, with one shot missing, and in a handsomely embroidered dressing-gown and slippers, the dead man lay as he had fallen.

Stepping quickly to the combined desk and table, Ormond Dewhurst said:

"Here is the slip of paper, sir, containing his last words on which I must rely to—

"My God! there is not a trace of writing upon it!"

The chief took the paper and saw that it bore no writing!

"I laid it there, sir, after the reading—utterly astounded by its threat and dismayed by its perfidious intent. It is the identical piece of paper—Ah! it was written with ink that fades after an hour's time—with phantom ink; and—and—"

The chief finished the sentence, as the accused hesitated:

"And that scrap of paper was the only direct proof of your innocence, Mr. Dewhurst?"

"The only proof, I fear. Truly the Fates are in league against me!" and the young artist, realizing the full extent of his peril, was deeply distressed, and, for a moment, cowered before the officer, whose keen scrutiny seemed to penetrate to the very soul of the man before him.

"Come!" was the chief's stern command, as he placed his hand upon Dewhurst's arm.

"To prison?"

"To prison!"

CHAPTER II.

A PAIR OF VOLUNTEER FERRETS.

"PLEASE, sir, may we speak to you for a few minutes?"

The words were uttered in a low, sweet voice, and addressed to the chief of police, as he sat alone in his office, looking over his morning mail just one week after the arrest of the young artist, Ormond Dewhurst, for the murder of Allen Gerard.

The chief looked up impatiently and with surprise, for he never received visitors, at that hour of the morning—looked up to behold an exceedingly pretty girl of sixteen, with an intensely earnest look in her lustrous

eyes as they modestly yet fearlessly met his own.

With her was a boy of the genus gamin, from twelve to fourteen, bright, intelligent, but not betraying the very neat appearance of the girl.

"How did you get in here?" asked the chief.

"There was a fight around the corner, sir, and I told the officer on duty he had better go there, and when he went away to send some one to the spot, we slipped in, for it is very important for us to see you, and we knew he would not let us in."

The chief smiled at this ingenious method for gaining admission to his private room and good naturedly addressed them:

"Well, as you are here, tell me what I can do for you?"

"We want to be detectives, sir."

"You wish to be detectives?" echoed the surprised officer.

"Yes, sir, my brother and I."

"Who are you?"

"I am Florette, the Flower Girl, sir, and boys call my brother the Newsboy King."

"Yes, sir; Kit, the King of the Newsboys, because I sell more papers than any two of them; but some of 'em calls me Kit the Ferret, because I've put the cops onto several gangs of crooks, sir."

"I have heard of you, Master Kit, and heard only what is good, so that is to your credit, while I have seen you, Florette, selling flowers around the hotels. What are your real names, and where do you live?"

"My name is Flora Earldon, sir; but Mr. Dewhurst called me Florette, and I liked it."

"Mr. Dewhurst?"

"Yes, sir, the artist."

"What do you know of him?" asked the chief, with increased interest.

"Oh, sir, so much! for I know that he is not guilty of the terrible murder of which he is accused."

"Have you proof of this, my girl?"

"Only, sir, that I know he would not do such a thing; he is too good and noble, he is indeed."

"What is Dewhurst to you, little woman?"

"Our friend, our benefactor and guardian. Two years ago he saved me from being kidnapped, one night, by designing men, who, it was supposed, had some reason for carrying me off, but what the reason was I do not know. You see, sir, our dear mother had just died then, and we were left alone to make our way in the world; but Mr. Dewhurst gave Kit money to buy papers, and set him up in business. Then, sir, he paid me well for being a model for a painting of a Flower Girl, an Italian Street Singer, Little Barefoot, and other things he painted. It was that way that Kit and I were able to have pleasant rooms and live respectably; and, besides, sir, I sold lots of flowers to gentlemen coming out of the hotels. But now, you have poor Mr. Dewhurst in prison, and say he is a murderer, and the papers tell such terrible stories about him; so we wish to be detectives and prove that he is not guilty, and that is what has brought us to you, chief."

"How can you do so, children—how can you help refute the evidence against the prisoner?"

"We will find a way, sir, as we know the city well, and the people. We have some money saved up to help us along in the work, and will spend it all in his cause."

"Please, sir, let us be detectives, won't you?" and the earnest eyes looked appealingly upon the kindly disposed and deeply-interested officer.

"My girl, at first I held a hope that there was a possibility of Mr. Dewhurst's innocence of this crime; but we find that he will say nothing of his past life, and his portfolio of drawings show that for ten years or more he had been a world-wide wanderer, for there are sketches bearing dates and names made in Mexico, South America, Europe, and, in fact, nearly all over the world."

"What we can find out about him is, that he ran away from home as a youth, that the man he is accused of murdering is his half brother who was left a large fortune by his father's death, and which, did Allen Gerard die a bachelor, Ormond Dewhurst would be the heir-to."

"By the death of his half brother, Dewhurst would have inherited this large fortune, from his half brother, with whom he was not on speaking terms, but who, being ill, sent to him at the last to make up the breach between them.

"Dewhurst can only say that his half brother hated him—that, feeling he had the consumption, and must die within a year or two, he preferred, rather than suffer, to take his own life, and in doing so let him be branded as his murderer, thus being revenged upon him, for a wrong he, Dewhurst, will not speak of, though the other is now in his grave.

"With his volunteered confession that he went to see his brother, in answer to a letter he received from Gerard, and which letter I have, and going upon an errand for the sick man, he returned to find him dead, and a note stating that he, Gerard, had taken his own life to have his brother hang as his murderer, the case is strengthened by the fact that Dewhurst can neither produce this note, nor give any conclusive evidence that it was not a bold and cleverly-concocted plan to get Allen Gerard out of the way in order that he, the next in order to inherit, might come in possession of the fortune.

"Now, in the face of all this array of circumstantial evidence against the accused, you wish to try and prove his innocence?"

"Yes, sir, I do wish to try, for, unless some one proves that he is not guilty, the law will hang an innocent man. It sometimes happens, you know, and it would make you feel very bad if you discovered, when poor Mr. Dewhurst was in his dishonored grave, that he was not guilty, and that you had refused to let Kit and I try and prove his innocence, with your consent and assistance.

"Won't you, sir?" and again the pleading look, while Kit added:

"Please, chief, do let us take a hand in, for, though we are young, we know a heap! You can just bet your shield on that!"

A moment of silence; then the chief said, with business-like decision:

"I will do so, yes; I will swear you in as specials, and give you your badges, and if you can save that man from the gallows, you will have made a noble return to one who has been so good to you; and besides, by showing that justice can err, you will contribute to the great mass of testimony bearing upon the danger of resting upon circumstantial evidence in capital cases. I admire you, children as you yet are, and most sincerely hope you may not work in vain."

"Oh, sir, I thank you!" and tears of gratitude filled the beautiful eyes of the girl.

"And here's to you, chief!" and the boy doffed his dirty felt hat with comical enthusiasm. "Sis and I will never dishonor these badges, you can bet!"

CHAPTER III.

A BEAUTIFUL ENIGMA.

"You wished to see me, the servant informed me, though you sent no card," and Myrtle Sturgis, handsome, brilliant, and haughty, swept into the library of her elegant city home, to find there Florette, the Flower Girl.

Unabashed by the hauteur of a woman who was then "the rage" in society, one who refused suitors by the score, no matter what their wealth and position—who, showing preference for none, had become known about the clubs as the "Beautiful Enigma"—Florette met her gaze unflinchingly and answered:

"Yes, Miss Sturgis, I have come to have a talk with you, if you please."

"I have no time to listen to tales of woe, so you can spare your breath and I will send you some money by my servant."

"Miss Sturgis, I am not a beggar; I have not come here to seek money, but justice—from you."

"Girl, what do you mean?" and the angry blood flushing the face of the young woman made her but the more beautiful.

"I mean, Miss Sturgis, that the trial of Mr. Ormond Dewhurst, an honorable, noble, wholly innocent man, for murder, commences to-morrow, and I have come to you to save him!"

If fired at random, it was a dead-center shot, for the angry face of Myrtle Sturgis became suddenly deathly pale, and she leaned heavily upon the back of the chair by which she was standing.

For a moment she could not speak, or did not; but, suddenly, with an effort, she regained her self-control and asked in a voice that had lost its melody of tone:

"Why do you come to me in his behalf—murderer as he will be proven to be?"

"I come to you because I believe you can help him—may even save him from the gallows."

"Oh! Miss Sturgis, will you not do all you can—tell what you know of Mr. Gerard's death—to save an innocent man from being hanged for the crime?"

Florette advanced a step nearer, and had dared lay her little sun-bronzed hand upon the arm of the beautiful woman.

It was quickly shaken off, as though it had been a viper's touch, and then followed the words:

"Girl, you are either mad, or are playing a game of blackmail to extort money!"

"If mad, I will see that you are taken care of, for I am not heartless though men call me so; but, if you are trying to force hush money from me, I will place you in the hands of the police."

"I am neither mad, nor a blackmailer. I am in solemn earnest in begging you to tell what you know about Mr. Dewhurst and the murder, or suicide, whichever it may be, of Mr. Allen Gerard."

"I know nothing, my acquaintance with Mr. Gerard having ended long ago, while I never even knew Mr. Ormond Dewhurst, only having heard of him as an artist of great promise, and now as the slayer of his half-brother."

"That is all that I can tell you, or any one else, girl."

"Not all you can but will tell me, you mean?"

"You are insulting, and I will call my servant to show you the door."

"No, do not do so, for that will only cause me to feel more bitterly toward you than I do."

"In what way have I ever wronged you?"

"Not me, but Mr. Dewhurst, in not appearing to fight his cause against merciless Justice that so often commits the monstrous wrong of punishing or dishonoring the wholly innocent."

"You do know Mr. Dewhurst, as I am well aware, and that is why I came to beg your aid—you know him very well; and your acquaintance with Mr. Gerard did not end long ago, as I can readily prove, and knowing what I do, I am convinced that you can help, if not wholly clear, Mr. Dewhurst."

"Will you not do so, Miss Sturgis?"

It was not a child who addressed her, and Myrtle Sturgis seemed to realize the fact; it was a brave-hearted, high-minded woman, bent on a mission of mercy and justice.

The society belle was silent for a moment and then asked, in a low tone:

"What are you to Mr. Dewhurst?"

"Only a friend who believes in his innocence—who knows he is innocent!"

"Who are you?"

"Florette, the Flower Girl."

"Did you know Mr. Allen Gerard?"

"He has often bought flowers of me, that is all."

"Did Ormond Dewhurst send you to me?"

"He did not! He never would have done that, not even to save his life!"

"Are you telling me the truth?"

"Yes, Miss Sturgis—the truth, and nothing but the truth."

"Then why did you come, if you knew Mr. Dewhurst would have forbidden you?"

"Because I hoped that you could and would save him—that you, somehow, hold the secret of the whole miserable business."

"Why do you assume that?"

"My brother Kit had several times taken notes from Mr. Dewhurst to you, and once from Mr. Gerard to you, so that I knew you were intimately acquainted with both men; and from other evidence which I can produce I am sure your testimony will at least shed new light on the case."

"In Mr. Dewhurst's studio are two portraits of you, one as a young girl, the other as you look now, which is proof enough, assuredly, that he must be an old friend. That

alone was reason sufficient for this call, was it not?"

"Why did you tell me an untruth, Miss Sturgis, and say that you did not know him? Did you have any special motive in trying to conceal the fact?"

The Beautiful Enigma evidently found herself in an unpleasant position, for she bit her lips nervously, her shapely hands clung hard to the back of the chair, and the color in her face came and went by turns.

But soon she answered firmly:

"I but told you the truth. I never knew Ormond Dewhurst, for that is an assumed name. When I knew him, in the past, he had not seen fit to sail under false colors, as now!"

"I am sorry, girl, that I cannot save your lover, for such I feel he must be to you, but I can do nothing for him, and I will not, I promise you, if you will keep your visit to me secret, appear against him and thus do him great injury by the testimony I would under oath have to give."

"I believe there is nothing more for me to say."

Florette, astonished and depressed, could say no more, but at once left the room and the house, murmuring:

"He not Ormond Dewhurst? What new mystery is this?"

But, once in the street, she turned, and half shook her clinched fist at the mansion.

"Those last words were a threat to scare me off. She does know more than she will admit and I will yet force her to speak!" she vowed, with almost fierce emphasis.

The Fair Ferret would fight to a finish!

There was a new enigma to solve:—what was that beautiful woman to the accused artist?

Florette would know!

CHAPTER IV.

THE LAW'S VERDICT.

"GUILTY!"

So said a jury of "twelve good men and true" of Ormond Dewhurst.

"Condemned to die!"

So said the judge.

The evidence against the prisoner had all been heard; there was, indeed, little said in his favor.

A man against whom nothing was known of real wrong before the night of Allen Gerard's death, had, after that tragic event, been painted in blackest colors.

His lawyer, pocketing his fee, had tried to save him, but could do nothing to counteract the alleged evidence and the thrilling eloquence of the district attorney, who knew just how to sway a jury and influence a judge.

The judge had charged with a belief in the guilt of the prisoner, and the jury had so decided.

The nerve of the accused man won the admiration of many, but was regarded by others as the bravado of a hardened criminal, and whose fine face and comely manners were used as a cloak to hide a wicked heart.

When asked what he had to say, why sentence should not be passed upon him, in a voice without a tremor, with eyes that did not quail, he said:

"Justice is infallible, the laws cannot err; I abide by its decision, accept the destiny of an ignominious death; but with my last breath I will assert—Not guilty as proven!"

Back to his prison went the condemned man, now, with the death sentence hanging over his head, to occupy the murderer's cell, while the world, with a sigh of relief, wagged on as before.

Granted permission to see him in his cell, by the chief of police, was Florette the flower girl, the self-constituted detective who had worked so hard to save him.

"So you have not forgotten me, Florette, though the world has turned its back upon me?"

"No, Mr. Dewhurst, and I have come to you to help me save you."

"Why, child, I am already lost, and before long will be executed."

"You could take an appeal?"

"With the same result, and but prolong the misery to all concerned."

"Mr. Dewhurst, you can save yourself."

"Yes, if escape from this living death were possible."

"Escape such as you hint at is impossible; but you can save your life."

"Ah! how do you mean?"

"You know that you did not kill Mr. Gerard; you may believe that he took his own life, but, if such is not your belief, you know who is the murderer!"

"Why, Florette, what has put this in your little head?"

"I came to you once before, and asked you to give me evidence that would clear you, for I felt sure you were acting a part, perhaps shielding some one."

"You refused to help me, and that but convinced me the more you were playing a part."

"Your trial is over, now, and you are sentenced to death."

"None knows that better than I, Florette."

"I waited one week to see if any one would come to prove your innocence, but no one has come."

"And no one will," was the pathetic response.

"Not unless forced to do so."

"I do not understand you, Florette."

Then pointedly came the question, while the girl's eyes seemed to read the very soul of the man:

"Mr. Dewhurst, what is Miss Myrtle Sturgis to you?"

As though he had been struck a hard blow, instead of asked a question, Ormond Dewhurst staggered back, while over his face swept a pallor like death.

"What do you know of her?" he asked in a voice quivering with feeling if not of apprehension.

"Answer me first, what is she to you?"

"Nothing whatever, now."

"What was she to you?" persisted the resolute girl.

"Let the dead past bury its dead, Florette, for I will not answer."

"Then she shall!" was the earnest response.

"Florette, beware! Do not rake over old embers that may spring into a blaze; do not re-open wounds that time has healed; but let all remain as it is."

"Mr. Dewhurst, you are deceiving me, and so are others; but I will not be beaten in my endeavor to save you—if not with your aid, why then without it! The truth shall not be masked; I will do the unmasking!"

"Where did you hear of Miss Sturgis, Florette?"

"It matters not when or where, for—"

"Did she send you to me?"

"She did not! and I am not coming again until I prove to you that, where the officers of the law could ferret out all to prove you guilty, there are those who will try to prove you innocent. If circumstantial evidence can hang you, real evidence shall set you free!"

And the prisoner was again left alone with his thoughts, which now seemed more bitter than ever.

CHAPTER V.

A FAIR FERRET.

"WELL, my fair detective, with all we could do, we were unable to prove the innocence of your artist friend, Dewhurst; and it was too bad, for he was a splendid fellow, clever, talented, and had a grand future before him."

"Why men of his caliber go wrong is one of the mysteries of crime I have been unable to fathom; but, sit down, Miss Florette, for, unlike Othello, your occupation is not gone, with the sentence of Dewhurst, as I wish to keep both yourself and your brother on my roll as detectives."

Florette sunk into the chair offered her, in a tired sort of way, and responded:

"Mr. Dewhurst is sentenced to die on the gallows, sir, but he has some two months yet to live, and much can be done in that time."

"Ah! He intends to appeal then?"

"On the contrary, sir, he refuses to do so, but I intend to make an appeal."

"To the governor, eh? It will do no good, young lady!"

"No, sir, not to the governor, but to you."

"I can do nothing."

"I thank you, sir, for what you did do,

for you and your men gave us most valuable aid, but with the light I had I could do no more, then; I had not time; but now I have time, and I appeal to you to trust me, to help me, for I am to-day more convinced than ever that Mr. Dewhurst is innocent, and that, if he would, he could save himself."

"Why does he not do so, then?" abruptly asked the chief.

"I will tell you a secret, sir: it is because he is a victim—a sacrifice; to save himself others must suffer, which he will not permit!"

"Ah! this is a new light upon his actions which I had never suspected; but, what proof have you of what you assert?"

"Circumstantial evidence."

"Stealing the law's thunder," suggested the chief, with a smile, and he added:

"I'd have given a month's pay to have heard you fire that shot at the judge."

"It is the truth, sir. I have no direct proof, only circumstances and suspicion, and that is why I have come to make my appeal to you."

"What would you have me do, Florette, for if Dewhurst is not guilty, then he must not die," and the chief was very much in earnest now.

"I have some money, sir, as I once told you, which Kit and myself have saved up, and I am willing to expend it to find out what I wish to know."

"What is that?"

"Well, sir, the officers of the law seemed so assured of the guilt of Mr. Dewhurst they did not devote their time to seeing what they could discover of his past that might have been in his favor."

"I half believe you are right."

"I know I am right, sir, and I will tell you that, while often waiting in Mr. Dewhurst's studio, I have looked over his folio of sketches, and I remember one which has a number of scenes in his earlier life; in fact, he has almost made his sketches serve as a diary of his past, and I recall that he was born in Virginia, was reared in a grand old home, and from all I could figure out from the penciled scenes I saw, his life was an unhappy one, rendered so by an overbearing brother, and a father who never felt much love for him, the son of his second wife."

"Remember, I gleaned all this, sir, from the sketches and what was written beneath them, and they seemed to tell of an unhappy boyhood, until some great sorrow drove him from his home and made a wanderer of him."

"What else have you to say, Florette?"

"You remember, sir, he willed the contents of his studio to me, and I have left all these just as they were."

"Yes, I recall it now, and I would like to look over those folios."

"I have the key, sir, of the studio, and Kit and I have spent hours there looking for links in the chain of evidence we hoped would yet save Mr. Dewhurst."

"It is from what I discovered there that I ask your aid, for a mere girl could do nothing, and Kit is too young, though he wishes to go; but you will send one of your best detectives, or man in whom you have the most perfect confidence, sir."

"Send a man where, Florette?"

"To Virginia, sir—to the boyhood home of Mr. Dewhurst."

"Ah! I see what you wish, now."

"I have jotted down names, sir, dates, and gotten together a number of sketches of people, incidents and scenes, and a clever man can go there and find out just why Mr. Dewhurst left home; why he changed his name; who were his foes, who his friends, and who it is he is shielding now, and sacrificing himself to do so, for when I know all this I can put my hand upon the one who knows whether Mr. Gerard was murdered or really did commit suicide."

"My fair little ferret, you are a born detective, and I will do as you request, giving you the very best man in the force."

"It will be well for the detective who goes on this mission to go with you to the studio; so say when you will be there and we will meet you."

"At three o'clock, sir, and I will have Kit with me, for he is awfully clever, and has given me a number of good suggestions."

"Yes, one who holds the title of King of

the Gamins, must needs be clever, for his constituents are a rare and motley crew."

"Do you know that you almost give me hope that Dewhurst may yet be saved?"

"He will, he shall be!" was the determined response of the fair, young ferret.

CHAPTER VI.

A WHEEL WITHIN A WHEEL.

THE appointment in the studio of Ormond Dewhurst was faithfully kept by all concerned, and the detective whom the chief of police brought with him was a man who might pass as a clergyman, a lawyer, or a well-to-do merchant.

The artist's paintings were gone over, the numerous souvenirs of travel, a few of his younger days, and then his portfolio of sketches, commencing away back when his artistic talent first began to reveal itself.

As Florette had aptly said, his sketches, with scenes and dates, portraying incidents as they did, were almost a diary of his life, and so Norman Moore, the detective, seemed to regard them, for he jotted down many notes, and made selections to carry with him.

So it was that Norman Moore, detective, and the cleverest man on the force, set out for Virginia, armed with all the data that could prove a foundation for the escape from the gallows of a man whom the chief now began to dread might be sacrificing himself to shield others.

In just three weeks Detective Moore returned from Virginia, and when Florette and Kit met him they eagerly scanned his face to read there a ray of hope for the condemned.

As well might they have tried to read a book in the darkness of night, for Norman Moore had schooled his features to become as unimpressionable as marble.

"You have seen the chief, sir?"

"Yes, Miss Florette, and have had a long talk with him. He sent me up to see you! I have something to tell you of interest to yourself."

"Then you have made some discoveries in favor of Mr. Dewhurst?"

"Let us first get this matter of interest to you and your brother off our hands."

"Mr. Dewhurst painted a portrait of your mother for you from an old miniature, I believe?"

"Yes; it was the one I showed you in his studio, sir."

"Well, when I was in Virginia, I stopped one day of storm at a handsome old home, where I was most hospitably received by the owner, a gentleman in declining years, who insisted that I should remain over the next day, which was Sunday, with him."

"As I was seeking information I was glad to do so, for he dwelt near Mr. Dewhurst's old home, and he seemed just the man to help me."

"But, imagine my surprise to find in his library a portrait, the counterpart of the one Dewhurst painted for you!"

"My mother's portrait, sir?"

"Yes, and I spoke of having seen a similar one, and instantly the gentlemen became interested, so I told him of you and your brother Kit, and the result was that I am able to bring you good news, for, opening his heart to me, I was told that his only daughter had married without his consent, a young man who was a roving music teacher, she having run away with him."

"Her father had discarded her, then; but, years after, he had seen a notice of her husband's death, in a railroad accident, and in vain had tried to find her to take her back to his heart and home."

"Your father's name was Earldon, I believe?"

"Yes, Mr. Moore."

"And your mother's name before she was married was—"

"Farwell, sir! Ellen Farwell."

"And the gentlemen who told me of his daughter is Alexander Farwell, and, a rich man. He lives alone in his grand old home, awaiting the coming of yourself and brother to gladden his declining years, for there is no mistake; I have investigated thoroughly; he is your grandfather, and glad am I that you and Kit will no longer have to be waifs of the streets of this great city. In fact, I became so interested in the discovery I had made in your case, that I remained all the time I was in Virginia at his home."

"Mr. Moore!" and Florette was upon her feet in an instant, her face flushed, her eyes flashing with indignation, as she continued:

"You were sent to Virginia on a mission of life and death, not to ferret out my mother's unfortunate history; and though I thank you for what you have done for us, I must say that I feel that you have betrayed your trust."

"I knew that my mother was disowned by her father on account of her marriage; I am aware that she was well born and was an heiress; while I certainly wish to let my father's faults be forgotten, now that he rests in the grave."

"I did not know that my grandfather had sought to find our mother, who died here in poverty and sorrow, sending no word to him who had disowned her."

"Oh! that she could have known that she was forgiven! Now I understand what the wicked men meant, who attempted to kidnap us, and from whom Mr. Dewhurst rescued my brother and myself, when they said the old man would pay a big price for us, and they'd see that he did."

"But, it is not of our good fortune I wish to speak, but of poor Mr. Dewhurst's misfortune; and as you seem to have left him to his fate, it remains for me to see what can be done for him, for, with death in sight, time flies quickly."

There was a twinkle in the detective's eyes as he gazed upon Florette's indignant face; but he did not interrupt her, and only when she had finished speaking, said:

"I did not need to go elsewhere, Miss Florette, as Mr. Farwell told me all that I cared to know about Dewhurst's antecedents; and I only took trips of a day away from his home to verify certain facts and secure legal proof that I deemed necessary to place in your hands, and which I will now do."

"Forgive me, for I wronged you in saying that you had betrayed my trust and left Mr. Dewhurst to his cruel fate," and tears welled up into the beautiful eyes of the young girl, quenching the fire of anger that had flashed there, a moment before.

CHAPTER VII.

BROUGHT TO BAY.

"Ah, it is you, girl? Your card reads Miss Earldon," and Miss Myrtle Sturgis crushed the bit of pasteboard in her hand as she saw who it was awaiting her in the library.

"Yes, Miss Sturgis, I have called again, and as my name is Earldon, I had a right to put it upon my card."

"May I ask if we are wholly alone?"

"Why do you ask?" demanded the belle.

"For your sake and mine, as it will be well to have no listeners to what I have to say."

The flush left the beautiful face, the red lips were bitten nervously, and then stepping to the door, Myrtle Sturgis closed it, for something about her young visitor commanded respect and deference.

"What have you to say?"

"Mr. Dewhurst has just one month to live, unless you save him."

"I can do nothing for him, as I once before told you."

"You must save him!"

"Do you dare threaten me, girl?"

"I do not threaten; your own deeds in the past do that."

Miss Sturgis was on her feet in an instant. "I will have you turned into the street!" she cried.

"One moment! Call a servant and there will be another to hear what I have to say."

"Girl, you are trying to extort money from me, and rather than have any trouble with you, I am willing to pay—"

"Do not offer money! It shows the weakness of your cause. I am not a beggar nor a blackmailer, as I told you once before. In fact, I have lately learned that I am to be an heiress, so no money you can offer can even influence me."

"What is your business with me?"

"Sit down and quietly hear me, and when you have heard, say yes or no as to what you will do."

"Now, Miss Sturgis, is this your handkerchief?"

"It is! Where did you get it?"

"It has a crimson stain upon it, you see! Nay, don't faint; that is a womanly weakness you should be above, just at this time!"

"This handkerchief, a pair of gloves, with clasps upon them, bearing your name, and a bracelet, a gold band with a ruby in it—rather an appropriate stone for the occasion on which it was last worn—were given to me the night of Mr. Allen Gerard's mysterious death."

"Who gave them to you?" gasped Miss Sturgis, white as the ceiling above her.

"A gentleman who met me on the street when I was selling flowers. He seemed glad to meet me, and asked me to keep them until he told me what to do with them, at the same time remarking that he had found them in a room where a death had occurred, but that I must not say anything about it to any one."

"And have you?"

"Not until to-day, when I went to him and demanded to know how and where he got the gloves, handkerchief and bracelet."

"Did he tell?"

"In the face of facts I placed before him he was compelled to speak—he could no longer suppress the truth."

"What did he say?" in the same hoarse whisper.

"He told me that he had gone to Mr. Gerard's home to visit him, in answer to a conciliatory letter he had from him, and had been asked to go upon an errand, after a lawyer."

"He found that he had been sent upon a fool's errand, for upon his return Mr. Gerard was dead, leaving a note that he had taken his own life and thus was a Nemesis even in his grave!"

"But, Mr. Dewhurst found that the note was written with an ink that faded out within an hour; that, during his absence, a visitor had been in the house, for a large sum of money Mr. Gerard had with him—and which he said he wished to have him put in bank the next day—was missing, while upon the desk were the gloves, handkerchief and bracelet."

"Now, Miss Sturgis, I do not accuse you of being the one who murdered Mr. Gerard—hold! look at this badge, and you will see that I come here with authority," and as Miss Sturgis read on the silver badge "Special Detective" she sunk back in her chair without a word.

"That you do know whether Mr. Gerard took his own life, or was murdered, I am sure, and I will tell you that I come here bristling with facts—terrible facts for you."

"I can tell you that, as a girl of sixteen, just a year younger than I am, you won the heart, among many others, of Ormond Gerard, now known as Ormond Dewhurst, for he took his mother's maiden name when driven from his father's home."

"You loved him, or professed to do so, for you were engaged to him, and when, through the cruel persecution, the falsehoods and unbearable conduct toward him of his half brother—who also influenced his father against him—he left his home, you broke with Ormond to pledge yourself to Allen Gerard."

"Allen Gerard went abroad for a couple of years, and, a year after his return, you were to become his wife."

"But it was said that the match was broken off, when, in reality, there was a secret marriage between you, sanctioned by your mother, but not known to his father or to others."

"When Allen Gerard's father died he left a peculiar will, leaving his elder son in full control of his large fortune; but, should Allen die, then Ormond was to be the heir, while, should the latter never appear to claim it, within a stated number of years, or die within a given time, all was to go to the daughter of a woman whom the old gentleman had loved in his earlier years."

"It is needless to say that the person referred to was your mother, and you were to come in possession of the fortune, under the circumstances named."

"Your mother was poor, but she moved with you to this city, and then came the news that Allen Gerard had married when abroad."

"Give him the benefit of believing his wife had died, and that he wedded you in good faith, but the truth remains that you were recently divorced from him, though he still allowed you the very generous income you have lived on here in this city."

"Hating his half-brother, as he did, from

earliest boyhood, as one who stood in his way and whom you loved, Allen Gerard, believing that he was going to die, and fearing you would marry Ormond yet, determined, rather than suffer, to end his own life quickly, and let his brother be run down as his murderer."

"While Ormond Gerard was away from his brother's home, you went there. You saw your chance, with one brother a suicide, the other hanged—for you now hated Ormond because he did not return to you—to get the fortune, by the terms of the will."

"Now, Miss Sturgis, you can prove whether Allen Gerard was a suicide or was murdered."

"Which was it?"

Myrtle Sturgis had listened like one dazed to the unraveling of the story of the past, making no comment.

Now, however, she said, in a decided tone:

"I went to his home, yes, to get my month's income, for, as his first wife was dead, I felt that I had a just claim upon him; but he was dead when I got there, and he was too great a coward to have taken his own life."

"I have nothing more to say."

"But I have, Miss Sturgis!"

"I wish to say that, unless you come out and admit your secret marriage to Allen Gerard—the divorce we will not speak of—and unless you admit your visit to his house that fatal and fateful night, and saw him lying there dead, left your gloves, handkerchief and bracelet there, and saw Mr. Ormond Dewhurst Gerard go into the house, which was the case, and saw him read that note of the suicide, before it faded—I say, if you refuse to do this act of justice, then will I bring you before the court of justice, which this time will not commit an error in becoming a Nemesis, to charge you with the murder of your maid, Adele Delaporte, when you discovered in her the real wife of Allen Gerard!"

There was a low moan, a white, upturned face and clasped hands, as, dropping upon her knees at the feet of Florette, the proud and wicked woman cried:

"Mercy! Mercy, I beseech you! I will do anything you wish!"

CHAPTER VIII.

THE FINISH.

"Not Guilty as Proven," was a startling headline for the papers to come out with, instead of having to chronicle the death on the gallows of Ormond (Dewhurst) Gerard.

The truth was wrested from a woman, at last—no other than the Beautiful Enigma, and who remained an enigma, still, save to a chosen few.

She could not see Ormond Gerard die, so it was stated, and therefore confessed to her secret marriage with Allen Gerard; to their separation for years; to her going to him the night of his death; to her finding him dying, by his own hand, and to discovering the note upon the table which had been penned a few seconds before he took his own life, and which did state that he died by his own hand, yet desired to have the crime fastened upon his half-brother.

There was much that she might have told, but what was confessed was enough to prove that Ormond Gerard had known what she could tell, yet had not betrayed her, and to the end had insisted to his fair detective that the whole black truth should not be known.

So Myrtle Sturgis was allowed to go free, glad to escape with her mother to scenes where she was unknown, yet bearing with her a wrecked life, for the still small voice of conscience would not be hushed, and, sleeping or waking, there was a skeleton in the innermost closet of her heart.

It was different with Ormond Gerard, for he came out from under the shadow into the sunshine of a happy life, where, as master of a large fortune and fine old home, he awaited impatiently the ending of Florette Earldon's schooldays, when he could claim her as his wife.

As for Kit, he devoted his life to caring for his grandfather and the large estate, and never tired of telling how circumstantial evidence had very nearly hanged the hero of his life!

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Vol. LXXI.



OR, TOM WORTH'S Full Hand.

BY DR. WM. MASON TURNER.

CHAPTER I. THE NIGHT WALK.

One! two! three! four! five! six! seven! came in mellow but half-muffled notes from a distant clock-tower, in the city. The two men, crouched in the thick gloom.

"Ha! seven o'clock, Teddy, and it's time we were off!" said one of the men. "The boss is punctual. S'pose we go?"

"All right, and we had better hurry. Step out, Launce, and see if the coast is clear. We mustn't call attention to our old rat-trap here," pointing to the dilapi-

THEY WERE TWO TALL, BRAWNY, ROUGH-LOOKING, SOOTY AND BEGRIMED MEN,
WEARING THE UNDERGROUND DRESS OF MINERS.

dated frame house that reared itself spectrally in the fast-setting darkness.

The man called Launce strode away cautiously in the gloom, and reaching a small knoll, the very eminence of the lofty hill, peered around him in every direction. His scrutiny was rapid, but it was searching. He saw nothing. Not a living soul was stirring on the desolate heights, save themselves, on that dismal evening.

With a low, satisfied chuckle, he hastily returned to his companion, who still stood under the shadow of the old house.

"Nobody is watching us to-night, Teddy, that's certain, and why? Because no one need be out to-night, except such poor devils as you and me!"

The man, rough, grimy and coarse as he was, spoke bitterly—it may be feelingly. For a moment his companion was silent, but then, looking up suddenly, he said:

"Yes, yes, you're right, Launce; we are the only ones who need be out, God knows! and yet I sometimes wonder—if indeed there is a God—that he would look on and see poor men suffer. Well, well; we seldom see daylight, and when we do, even then our time isn't our own." There was a pause again.

"Well, Teddy, it don't matter; so let it be. Everybody has his or her place, and we have ours! But, did you forget it, Teddy? There are others out this nasty night, if there's any truth in man's word. The boss, you know; and his business! Our part in that business, too, eh, Teddy?"

"Yes, I haven't forgot it, depend upon it, for there's money in the work, and money buys bread, and—well, you know it, bread feeds children, and we must do it! Bad luck to the day that put us in his power!" and the man smote his clinched hands together.

"And, Teddy, even then, on that day, we were working for our children; why did he not send us to jail, and be done with it?"

"He uses us better, Launce! As we are in the mud, let us wade it through, *through*, I tell you! a day of reckoning may yet come!"

"God grant it!"

At that moment a single sounding stroke from the distant clock-bell smote softly, yet distinctly on their ears.

"Come, Teddy; we forget ourselves; that's a quarter past seven, and we must be gone, or it will be too late. See how dark it is now, and it's more than a step from here to Mount Washington road."

"We'll go," replied his companion, buttoning his coat tightly around his throat; "but I'll tell you, Launce Ringwood, *this* job is the dirtiest of all, and I don't like it, that's all."

Quietly, and with cat-like steps, despite the solitude of the locality, the men emerged from the shadows of the old house into the heavy gloom of the surrounding darkness. Without hesitating they entered a small path leading straight along the edge of the dizzy cliff, which hung directly over the darkly-flowing Monongahela. They threw not their gaze over the intervening river to the suburbs of Birmingham, whose thousands of throats of licking flame and fire shone weirdly on the night, but, with heads bent down, they pursued their way swiftly, and as if thoroughly acquainted with every inch of the ground along the narrow path skirting the frightful ledge. For ten minutes they walked thus, then paused for a moment, and looked around them.

"Can't you trust your feet to the steps, down the hill, Teddy?" asked the one called Launce.

"I had rather not to-night. 'Tis a bad place in the daytime, and though it saves the matter of a mile, yet that's a nasty fall of two hundred feet, Launce, and the steps are slippery."

"My notion, too. We'll go down through the town; 'tis safe and no risk. Come."

The speaker, followed closely by his tall, sturdy companion, turned off at right angles as he spoke, and, crossing the summit of the hill, struck into Stephenson street—at all times lonesome and uninviting, but now doubly dismal, soundless and dreary.

The men had not noticed a figure that had hung on their steps from the moment they had left the old house. That figure, keeping back a convenient distance, had steadily but swiftly followed along the dizzy path; and, when they paused to consult about descending the "steps," the "shadow" had paused too. And, as before, when they strode over the hill, he was again quickly on their track.

"Strange, strange!" this spy muttered. "Did chance bring me, in my wretchedness, to the solitude of this spot for any good purpose? Nay, can I be instrumental in doing anything good under any circumstances? Has not heaven shut out its light from me, so that not a ray of hope can shine through the ominous clouds that envelop me? We'll see; we'll see! Those voices are strangely familiar to me! Is there some villainy afoot? I'll follow them, come what may. Whew! how chilly the noxious wet wind! that searches through you!" He drew his coarse coat up around his ears, and grasping more firmly his stout cane, he likewise entered Stephenson street, and trod cautiously on behind the two night-walkers.

The men in advance took their way down the

deserted street, their pace increasing momentarily, as if they desired to make up for lost time. At length they turned from that street into Bedford avenue, and continued on down, toward the heart of the city. Five minutes afterward, and they appeared in the civilized portion of the city—on Fifth avenue, on which thoroughfare, despite the now unpropitious evening, were many persons, shivering along in the smoky gloom. The light from the shop windows shone murkily, and a kind of unearthly, spectral glamour hung over the half-lit street. The lamps were only burning on one side of the avenue, and this side was speedily shunned by the two rough-looking men. They seemed to court the shade, as they hurried forward, looking neither to the right nor left. At length they turned abruptly into Smithfield street, and in this thoroughfare, as in the last, they took the shady side. The solitary walker, who hung behind them, did the same.

Then came in sight the two lamps standing at the entrance of the bridge over the black Monongahela. The lights were flaring wildly about in the raw wind that swept along the open levee. The men paused, and glanced up and down the dark length of Water street. They were now compelled to go beneath a light, so they boldly strode by, deposited their toll and passed on.

They were under the light but a moment, but that moment was sufficient to reveal them as two tall, brawny, rough-looking, sooty and begrimed men, wearing the underground dress of miners.

Another moment, and he who followed them stood under the flashing lamplight, settling his toll, and he, too, was clad in the rough garb of a miner. Receiving his pennies in change, he strode along after the others over the bridge.

CHAPTER II.

A NOVEMBER DRIZZLE.

It was, indeed, a disagreeable night which glowered down over the smoke-clad city of Pittsburgh. The murky lamplights, now steady and dull—now flaring and flickering, as the heavy gusts occasionally tore through the half-deserted streets, and forced their wet breath through the creaking crevices of the glass—burnt with a half-yellow glare, each separate lamp-top covered by a halo of church-yard white.

It was a genuine November night, and genuine November weather in 1859. All day long, from early dawn, the cold, almost icy drizzle had come down. About four o'clock in the afternoon a rift had appeared in the leaden clouds; a gleam of half-splendid sunshine had shot down, and immediately rainbows were belting, in beautiful arches, the dismal city in all directions.

At the moment when it seemed as if a more auspicious hour was breaking over the place, a handsome, open buggy, drawn by two spirited bays, and driven by a young gentleman, evidently of wealth and fashion, spun across the Suspension Bridge, then up Federal street, and turning suddenly into Stockton avenue, drew up in front of the residence of Richard Harley, Esq.—ex-iron-merchant and millionaire—now the richest man in Allegheny City; his mansion, too, as he prided himself, the lordliest and grandest in that aristocratic suburb of Pittsburgh.

With the skill of an experienced driver he brought his horses up to the curb, uttering a half-exclamation of triumph at his dexterity, and a word of encouragement to his beautiful steeds; then flung the silken reins over the dashboard, and sprung lightly to the walk.

A pair of eyes were watching him from that lordly mansion, for Grace Harley, the only daughter and child of the rich man, stood behind the heavy silken curtains gazing through the French-plate pane, at the driver and his equipage. But there was no welcoming light in Grace Harley's hazel orbs—no warming tinge on the smooth cheek, to tell that the heart was pulsing its rich currents for him who stood outside. Rather, it was, that a half-baleful glare—a vindictive fire, streamed out of the dark brown eye; rather, too, that the warm blood flowed away from the rounded cheek. Certainly, as she turned, half-pettishly from the window, an exclamation of commingled impatience and disdain burst from the coral lips of Grace Harley. Mr. Somerville evidently was not a welcome guest.

As she spoke, a tall form darkened the door, and the stately, aristocratic, moneyed Mr. Harley entered the room.

"Ah! Grace, what is it—what is it?" he exclaimed; for, as he was near the parlor-door, he had heard her half-uttered exclamation.

"Why, papa—why, nothing much," stammered Grace, reddening.

"Nothing much, eh! and yet there is something," said her father, kindly, but positively.

"Well, papa, if you must have it, Mr. Somerville is here again, and on such a dreadful day!"

"Mr. Somerville? He certainly won't hurt you, Grace; he is an excellent young man—worthy of any maiden's regard. And, as for the day, why it has cleared off beautifully, and for a rarity, we have the sun again. See!" and

the father pointed through the curtains at the broad, rich flash of sunlight, which just then entered the room and covered the rich, velvet carpet with its golden glimmer.

"Yes, papa, all true," said Grace, half-dreamily, "but I can't bear Mr. Somerville. I think he is hateful!"

"Grace, Grace, you speak wildly," answered the father, sternly. "Mr. Somerville is the son of my best friend, now deceased; he is a well-educated young man, and, in a word, I like him; he is already rich, and—"

"And, papa—forgive me—that covers all, in your eyes—nay, forgive me, papa, but I know it!"

A frown distorted the forehead of the old ex-merchant; he clinched his hands violently. A hot answer leaped to his lips, but he crushed it back.

Grace cowered not, but patted the carpet with her slipped foot.

"You do me wrong, Grace," at length spoke the father, calmly, as if by an effort, "but let me tell you, daughter, that I fear the memory of that rascal—that minion whom I nurtured—who stole your heart—"

"Sh! sh! papa, I implore you! Speak not of him thus, for— But Mr. Somerville comes."

Steps sounded on the graveled walk without; then in the porch; then the bell jingled loudly, as if rung by a hand that was not afraid to pull it.

In a moment the visitor was admitted and shown into the parlor. Mr. Harley was striding, consequentially, up and down the limits of the elegant apartment, but Grace had shrunk away into a large arm-chair, in a corner of the room, where the shade was greater.

Mr. Somerville was a tall and rather spare man of about twenty-eight. His head was small—too small for one of his stature—and covered with a mass of close-cut black hair. A thin, rather cadaverous face, with an aquiline nose, heavy, protruding lips, the upper shaded by a thick, scrubby mustache, and a small, retreating chin closely shaven, as were his lantern cheeks, did not make a very pleasing countenance, or one calculated to fascinate the susceptibilities of the other sex. But, perhaps, what Somerville failed in, in one respect he made up in another? Perhaps for homeliness of features his rich and elegant apparel compensated. His overcoat, of costliest fabric, was thrown open, disclosing the garments he wore beneath to be made of the finest material and latest mode. The boots he wore and the soft silk hat which he crushed negligently between his large palms—for his hands were, as were his feet, disproportionately large—showed likewise that he commanded money. The large stones sparkling in his spotless shirt front—and the magnificent cluster that twinkled on the little finger of his left hand, which, unlike its fellow—which carried an ivory-handled whip—was ungloved—were the proofs—indeed, they were needed—that Somerville kept a bank account, and that his drafts were honored. But there was something about the half-bluish, half-gray eyes of the young man that struck a chill into your very vitals, for if there is any truth in eyes, Somerville's told of treachery or deceit, it was hard to decide which.

The young man shook hands cordially with the old ex-iron-merchant, and noticing him no further, turned a scrutinizing look around the room.

"Ah! Miss Grace, you are there, are you?" and walking up to where the maiden sat, he bowed obsequiously low.

Grace Harley shuddered as the man approached, and she endeavored to put aside, or not to see his proffered hand. She could do neither, for in an instant his cold, limp, half-wet hand, now hastily ungloved, was thrust into her own warm, velvety, shrinking palm.

"I have called, Miss Grace, with my open buggy and bays, to remind you of a promise to accompany me to the new drive, back of Mount Washington. We have two hours yet, and my horses do not travel slowly," he continued, standing all the time.

For a moment Grace hesitated, but then, as if summoning up her courage, she said, distinctly:

"I am certainly obliged for your kindness, Mr. Somerville, but I think the weather too unpropitious."

"Not at all so, Miss Grace," interrupted the young man, rather rudely, and very earnestly, as an anxious shade flitted over his face. "The weather has cleared, and—"

"Of course it has, Mr. Somerville," in turn interrupted Mr. Harley, rather authoritatively; "and Grace will go with you, and I thank you for your kindness, too. Of course you will go, Grace."

As he spoke, he cast a quick, half-angry look at his daughter. The maiden understood that look.

Rising, with a half-audible murmur, which sounded, indeed, more like a sigh than anything else, the young girl swept out of the room.

And then the gentlemen returned to their conversation.

In a few minutes, covered with ample wrappings, Grace Harley, looking rosy and beautiful,

yet somewhat sad, withal, entered the parlor. No time was lost. They were soon out at the light wagon; the girl was placed tenderly in, packed closely around with a heavy, rich robe, and then, taking the reins, the gentleman spoke lightly to the restive steeds, and away they dashed.

The sun-rift in the clouds soon closed, however, and ere they had been gone five minutes, the smoky canopy apparently denser than ever settled over the city. But Somerville did not turn back. In ten minutes he had crossed the Suspension Bridge and was rattling on up Fifth avenue toward the Smithfield street bridge. Over this they soon passed, and had commenced the ascent of the Mount Washington road.

CHAPTER III.

A DARK SECRET ON THE HILL.

ONE dark night, just a week previous to the evening first mentioned in our story, a tall, thickly-wrapped figure appeared above the steps leading from the cluster of grimy houses below, on the banks of the Monongahela, and for a moment stood panting on the broad plateau of Boyd's Hill. The place was deserted, for the hour was late—certainly not far from midnight. With but a moment's pause, and a cautious glance around, he turned away and took the narrow path running by the brink of the cliff. He continued along this path for a couple of hundred yards; then striking across the summit of the hill, continued on, until he stood under the shadow of a rickety old frame house—the same to the outside of which the reader has been introduced. All was as silent as a churchyard.

The man, after peering around him, stepped softly to the closed door, and looked through the crevices.

No ray of light came out into the darkness. Then he placed his ear to the solid panel and listened for a moment. No sound came forth. He rapped a peculiar rap, on the solid door, but the dull, heavy echo within—sounding supernaturally loud—alone came back.

"All's well—all's well!" he muttered. "They know me well, and they'll come on the minute. What! so late?" as a far-off clock sounded on the night air. "Well, well, they must be near now, and I'll hurry in and look at that keepsake—my 'Dead Secret!' which, like a fool, I have not yet buried from sight. I'll look at it! It nerves me to my work, begun with it! It and my friend here"—drawing a brandy-flask from his side coat-pocket, "will nerve me up to what is yet to be done!" and so saying he drank a deep, full draught. And then he thrust back the flask. For a moment he reeled under the fiery potion, and then again he stood erect.

"Ha! ha!" he laughed, low yet fearlessly to himself, "that is the priceless potion—the elixir of strength—of high courage—nay, of life itself! Now I am strong and now I'll enter."

Using the key drawn from his overcoat pocket, he flung back the bolt and entered the house. All was darkness and gloom within; but suddenly a light burst forth, as if by magic, and in a moment the room was aglow with almost supernatural brilliancy. The light came from a massive chandelier, glittering with pendants and heavy with cut-glass globes hanging from the center of the ceiling. It was evident that the many lights had been burning low, and that the man had suddenly turned them on.

A singular scene of richness and beauty was revealed.

The room of this dilapidated, rickety old shell—as it appeared to be from the outside—was fitted up with all the splendor of an aristocratic parlor. Sofas of richest velvet, chairs of rare value—inlaid tables of cunning workmanship, fairly crowded the limited space of the apartment. A heavy carpet of costliest manufacture covered the floor; and paintings, in richly gilded, massive frames, hung upon the velvet-papered walls.

The man, half reeling, glanced above him and then staggered back and sunk on one of the sumptuous seats.

"Ha! ha!" he exclaimed, "this is my cabin! all mine—and ye gods! the joyous hours that have been mine here, and—but, I forget," he exclaimed, as he quickly arose, and reeling across the room, suddenly rolled down a heavy curtain before the door, thus cutting off all possibility of a tell-tale ray of light penetrating beyond. There was no window whatever to the room!

"'Tis best to be cautious," he said; "it would not do for curiosity-seekers to be drawn here by a straggling light. It's all right now."

He retired to his seat, and for a moment bowed his head between his hands.

The brilliant light from the chandelier shone on an unusually tall and spare man, whose person was wrapped in a heavy overcoat reaching almost to his feet; his face was almost wholly concealed by a mass of long, black, curling whiskers. Over his brow was drawn a broad-brimmed slouched hat. His appearance and his attire certainly were not in keeping with the almost marvelous richness of the chamber; and yet he had called this place his "cabin."

At length he raised his head; it was reeling to and fro.

"By Jove!" he exclaimed, "I took too much of that draught—and I'm not steady enough.

But it will do, and I can drive it away. Ah! my old friends! you that have passed hours of mad revelry with me in this noble old chamber—where are you now? Some are walking, as of old, the broad avenues of sin—*Sin?* Nonsense! There is no such thing as sin as long as money lasts! No, no! The world is a cesspool of sin; it is above, around, beneath us. It is everywhere, and will ever be. But my good friends: some are enjoying themselves—yes, that's better. Others have grown straight-faced and gone back on themselves, the fools! and others are in the churchyard, under the wet grass and the damp, heavy clay! ugh!"

For several moments he sat still, changing not his position, nor saying a word. The wind still sighed and sung dolefully around the old house, and the drear November air crept through the crevices of the door, and swayed the heavy curtain hanging there gently to and fro. The man drew his thick coat more closely around him and shivered as he felt the searching breeze creeping through, and as he noticed the almost supernatural lifting of the curtain, by the door.

"Cold—cold! and yet not so cold as some who are under the wet grass to-night! No, no! but nonsense! Away with such feelings! I must think of other matters."

"What a good thing for me that I saw that little affair that raw evening, away down deep in the mine—nothing though it was, in itself, yet enough to send my good friends to jail—my noble workmen! Ha! ha! poor fools! and they are mine, to the death. They must do this work for me. I've sworn I would triumph, and triumph I shall! She shall be mine, by some or other means. Ye gods! what mad dreams of love! Love? yes, and love of gold, too, have floated over my brain, waking and sleeping, as I have thought of her. And she, so cold, so imperious, so repelling, yet so lovely, so entrancing!"

"Does she love that low-born adventurer yet? It must be. And strange fancies I am impressed with. I have lately seen a face familiar, wondrously similar to his!"

"That for her love for him. All I wish is her hand and her gold, and this move must bring it. The fellows are late," he exclaimed, glancing at a richly-mounted clock on the mantel-piece, the hands of which pointed to one o'clock, "and yet they have never failed me, and they cannot fail me now. They dare not! Have I committed myself to them? Am I the least in their power? No! And if I am, money could buy me clear. I am safe!"

"Now I will look at my guest—my skeleton in the closet—ha, ha! to remind me of him who came between me and the girl I loved—loved!"

He staggered to his feet, and half-lowered the light. Then he paused, and approaching the door, listened intently. But as before, no sound was heard, save the moan of the wind over the bleak hill.

The man stepped back at once, and going to the further wall of the house, reached up and struck on a particular spot a sharp blow. There was no response. He struck again, and yet there was no response.

"Confound it!" he muttered, as he drew a chair close to the wall. Springing upon it he put both hands on the wall and pressed.

Instantly a heavy section of it slowly started, and commenced to descend, the motion being accompanied by a sad kind of creaking as of rusted pulleys and chains.

The man stepped back and drew away the chair, and folding his arms closely and determinedly across his chest, gazed at the descending wall. Slowly it sunk, until a long black box appeared in view, and in it in deathly array lay a bleached skeleton.

At that moment a low, cautious whistle sounded without. Placing his hands again on the sinking section of the wall, by one determined effort the man raised it to its place, where it fitted so nicely that no eye could detect it.

Drawing a pistol and placing it in convenient reach, he approached near the door, answered the whistle and then drew back the bolt. Instantly the door was opened and two large men entered. Then the door was closed again.

It was nearly day when three persons left the house and bent their way toward the city. And then, from the gloom, not fifty yards away, another figure slowly raised itself and followed on leisurely toward the inhabited portion of the sleeping town.

CHAPTER IV.

MOUNT WASHINGTON ROAD—AFTER DARK.

THE miserable rain still descended, and a dismal night settled down on everything.

The open carriage, with its occupants, proceeded slowly—so slowly, indeed, that the restive bays shivered with cold, as they labored on up the rear face of the lofty hill—Mount Washington. It was certainly seven o'clock; the darkness was intense, and the driver cautiously paused now and then, and peered ahead to be certain that he was going in the right direction.

Grace Harley, silent and frightened, shrunk away to the far corner of her seat. The young man carefully, tenderly drew the wrappings closer around her, as if to reassure her.

"I'm so sorry, Miss Grace, that I have brought you into this scrape."

"Say nothing of it, Mr. Somerville. Our object now is to get back as soon as possible. I am chilled through, and papa, I know, is very uneasy about me."

Fairleigh Somerville did not answer at once, but still continued busying himself with the dash-apron, and in tucking in the wrappings around his fair charge.

"'Twas a stupid mistake of mine, Miss Grace," he said, at length. "I took the wrong fork in the road, though I've been this way often enough to have known better. As soon as we clear the precipitous ascent, I can promise you that my bays will go fast enough."

Several moments passed in silence, the bays still leisurely bending to their work, and drawing the light vehicle on toward the top of the giddy hill. The rising breeze, wet and cold, blowing more steadily, told them they were nearing the summit of the black mountain.

Fairleigh Somerville turned uneasily in his seat, disarranging as he did so the wrappings spread over their laps, which he immediately busied himself to rearrange. He peered around him, to the right and to the left, in front and behind, and he spoke often to his horses.

All at once the young man turned to his fair charge, and said, in a low, insinuating voice:

"Pardon me, Miss Grace, pardon me; I would like to say just one word or so to you now. Can I speak, Miss Grace?" and he thrust his face insinuatingly, impudently, close to hers.

The maiden drew her veil, now wet and limp with the searching mist, closer around her face, and shrunk still further away. She trembled in every limb for a moment, but by an effort recovered herself.

"I cannot say nay, Mr. Somerville; but can you talk and drive with sufficient care, too?"

She evidently wished to avoid hearing what he had to say—to throw him off his guard. But Somerville, now that he had broken the ice, would not turn back. He still leaned toward her, and peered straight at her.

"Yes, Miss Grace, I can do both; the horses are safe; they know the road as well by night as by day, and, pardon me, Miss Grace, it does not take long to say—that, as of old, despite your frowns and your every mark of discouragement, I love you still!"

The girl started, as a wild shudder crept over her frame, and cowering in her seat, she said not a word.

"I have never ceased to love you, Grace, since the moment I saw you on your return to your native city; and," continued the young man, with increasing fervor, "my love grows stronger as the days, weeks and months roll by. This, though a strange opportunity, yet is a fitting one for me to tell you this. I have waited patiently for some bright sign to come from you, Grace—waited these two long years of sorrow to me—patiently. I have endeavored to show you by my devotion, and by every other means in my power, that you still were very dear to me. Your father's consent I have already obtained."

Grace Harley writhed in her seat, and, do what she could, a half-groan burst from her.

Fairleigh Somerville heeded neither; he was now trembling with pent-up emotion, of whatever nature it was.

"His consent has long since been given me, and now, Grace, yours only is wanting. I am rich and young; I again tender you my wealth, a strong right arm as a defense, a loving breast for a pillow to you. Tell me, Grace, if you cannot love me in return, or give me some slight token whereby I may be encouraged to hope for your final consent."

Still Grace Harley answered not, and as the young man paused, she turned as if to leap from the vehicle. But she controlled this impulse, and in a calm tone spoke:

"You are right, Mr. Somerville, in saying that this place, after all, is fit for what you have spoken. Please consider it an equally suitable spot for saying what I shall, in reply. As before, I appreciate the offering you have laid at my feet, but, as before, I cannot accept it. Though time has rolled by, it has brought no change in my views on the subject of which you have just spoken. I do not love you, Mr. Somerville, and must beg, now, that this be my final answer."

"And you love another, I suppose, miss?" asked the man, suddenly and rudely.

The girl answered promptly:

"I did not say it, Mr. Somerville, and I cannot answer such questions. Let us drive on home."

"You still love the memory of that contemptible wayside beggar; but he cares not for you; he has gone—forever!"

"Sir!" exclaimed the girl. "I am under your escort, Mr. Somerville, and I trust to you to conduct me home to my father."

"Pardon me, Miss Harley, if I seemed rude," said the young man, after a slight pause; "my emotions got the better of me; and—Ah! here we are at last at the top."

Sure enough, showing dimly under the carriage, and a few yards in front of them, lay two

roads, indicating that they had reached the summit of the mountain. One of the roads ran along for a short distance, on the top of the dizzy ridge, and then, gradually, it drew behind the summit of the great hill. The other skirted along the very edge of the precipitous height itself, overlooking the Monongahela, at least fifteen hundred feet below. This was known as the Mount Washington Road, and, at all times, even in the day, is considered a giddy and a breakneck drive—the road, in many places, crumbling into the very chasm, and hardly wide enough for a carriage to pass without risk of rolling over the ledge.

For a moment young Somerville hesitated, and then coolly turned his horses' heads and drew them into the last-mentioned road, overhanging the dark river far beneath. At the same time he struck the spirited steeds viciously with his whip. In an instant they darted forward, and the light carriage spun along the lofty edge, its wheels dislodging the earth, on the dizzy brink of the beetling cliff.

"Good heavens, Mr. Somerville!" exclaimed the girl in terror; "you are surely not going to try the dangers of this road on such a night? Oh! do—do stop—do stop—and let me get out!" and she clung to his arm.

"Do not embarrass my movements, Miss Harley," returned the man, in a harsh, cold tone, "or you'll have both of our necks broken in a very few moments."

And the steeds still dashed on—the light vehicle rolling and jerking under the impetus, in fearful proximity to the ledge.

"Oh! I beseech you, Mr. Somerville, turn back—turn back!"

"Turn back? Why, Miss Harley, have your senses forsaken you? It would be sure death to attempt to turn back now, and I can scarcely hold the horses. Be steady! be steady! All depends on the sure-footedness of the horses, now."

His tone was very serious, and Grace felt him tremble. On they dashed, and now the narrowest part of the road was reached—the loftiest and dizziest, too. Fairleigh Somerville glanced quickly around him, in every direction, and then exclaimed, in a loud voice:

"Halloo, there!"

Before the echo of his words had died away, suddenly two brawny men started, as it were, from the very shade of the roadside, and sprung toward the vehicle. One seized the reins, and pulled down the champing horses; the other dashed for the carriage. Somerville sprung to his feet and raised his whip, but at that moment was hurled out heavily to the road. The horses took fright, and bursting from the man who stood by their head, darted off at a fearful pace along the giddy path.

Grace Harley had sunk back, fainting, in the buggy. Suddenly a tall, sinewy figure stood in the way of the flying horses, and an arm of iron and a grip of steel were fastened on the bridle by the head, as the horses' feet were raised almost over the fearful chasm.

The struggle was desperate between that stalwart man and the maddened steeds, and the earth crumbled beneath his feet, and rolled down the mountain-side, under his efforts. But he gradually pressed the smoking animals back—back; and then he dashed to the side of the carriage.

"Thank God, Miss Grace, that you are saved!" he exclaimed, in a deep, laboring breath.

Before he could assist her to alight, he was struck a fierce blow on the temple, and sunk tumbling to his knees.

"That for you, Tom Worth! you intruding scoundrel!"

When the brave man had recovered his senses, the carriage and all had disappeared—not a trace was left behind.

The man slowly rose to his feet and glanced about him, and then, without any word, took his way as swiftly as he could down the Mount Washington Road.

CHAPTER V.

THE DAY AFTER.

LATE that night, the one of startling adventure on the dizzy height of the Mount Washington Road—later by far it seemed than there was any necessity to be, judging from the distance to be traversed—an open buggy, drawn by two dashing steeds, after clearing the long stretch of the Suspension Bridge, whirled rapidly up Federal street, in Alleghany City, clattered around into Stockton avenue, and drew up in front of the elegant mansion of Mr. Richard Harley, the retired iron-merchant.

Despite the lateness of the hour, however, lights were still gleaming in the hallway, through the transom over the door, and were shining here and there through the large house.

The driver of the buggy paused a moment and glanced around him. He was alone in the vehicle, and he laughed low as he noted the glancing lights in the hall and house.

"Too bad! too bad!" he muttered, "to come back with such news! And yet it will not seriously hurt him! Time flies; I am sleepy; and now I must break the tidings! Here goes!"

As he spoke, he cast the reins loosely over the

dashboard, and left the panting horses to take care of themselves.

Assuming a shambling, uncertain gait, as if he was hurt, the man walked up the graveled way, and pulled furiously on the bell. Almost in an instant the door was opened by old Mr. Harley himself—terror and anxiety on his face.

"Ah! Mr. Somerville! So glad you have come! And Grace—Grace! She is not with you! Why stayed you so late? and we were so anxious, and why—what is this? what is this, Mr. Somerville? You hurt, and where—where is Grace?—speak, sir! speak at once!" and the old man advanced threateningly toward him.

But Fairleigh Somerville, pushing rudely by the old man, who now stood with starting eyes and clasped hands, sunk as if exhausted into a chair, and groaned aloud.

"Wait—wait, sir, but a moment!" interrupted the young man, speaking in a labored voice. "Wait until I can speak, and I will tell you all!"

"Yes, tell me all, Fairleigh Somerville!" said the old man, in a stern voice; "and mark you well—if you have harmed my child, a father's vengeance will not spare you!"

The old man's frame quivered as these words, hot and earnest, fell distinctly from his lips.

Young Somerville half sprang to his feet, forgetting his hurt, and pain; but, almost instantly, he sunk down, groaning and muttering.

"You need not menace me, Mr. Harley," he said, slowly, "and I am not now in a condition to reply properly to your insinuations—nay, your downright unjust charge. I am hurt—badly hurt, in defense, too, of your daughter!"

He paused as if for breath.

"Oh, God! Mr. Somerville; forgive me! I know not what I am saying; but haste—haste and tell me of my daughter! My heart is bursting—and she—she is my all!"

Still Somerville spoke not; and could the wretched old father have seen the half-demoniacal smile—not of triumph exactly, but demoniac, nevertheless—that flitted over the face and curled the mouth of the young man, his hand had not spared him.

"Be seated, Mr. Harley, and send the domestics away," at length said Somerville, in a low tone, looking up, and motioning the old man to a seat.

At a sign from the master, who at the same time sunk languidly into a chair, the several white-faced, frightened servants left the hallway.

"Listen, Mr. Harley," began the young man, "and do not interrupt me. I must hurry through and hasten home, for I am sadly in need of surgical aid."

"Go on, Mr. Somerville," said the old father, huskily.

"We—Miss Grace and myself—took a long and pleasant drive along the new way recently cut behind Mount Washington. The rain continuing, and your daughter expressing a desire to return, I turned my horses around, and set out homeward again. Whether it was owing to the lateness of the hour, the gloom hanging over everything, or to the newness of the road to me, inadvertently, at all events, I took the wrong road, and—"

"Is this true, Mr. Somerville—true before God and man?" and the old man looked straight in the other's eyes.

Somerville hesitated, and this time he did half quail, and his eyes wandered nervously away from the fixed gaze of the other. Then a red flush passed over his face, and he replied, very sternly and angrily:

"You are an old man, Mr. Harley, and have much to excuse you; but, sir, I cannot listen longer to your innuendoes and insults."

"Excuse me—forgive me, Mr. Somerville! I am almost crazy! Say on! say on!"

"Well, sir—and no more such unpleasant interruptions, if you please—I at last managed to find my way back to the main road, and at length reached the top of the mountain. I then entered the ledge-road."

"The ledge-road! and on such a night! Why, sir—"

"Hear me through, or not at all, sir! I entered that road, because I could not prevent it. My horses had already pulled into it, and I dared not think of attempting to turn round then. Indeed, it was impossible to do so, as you know, sir."

The old man impetuously nodded his head.

"Well, sir," resumed Somerville, "we had proceeded safely on our way, for a quarter of a mile, when, reaching that portion of the road which overhangs the deepest chasm on the way, and which is unprotected by fence or wall, suddenly two villains dashed out from the roadside. In an instant I was hurled from my carriage, and to the earth by a murderous blow! I saw one of the men rush for Miss Grace; then the horses took fright, and darted away for the cliff."

"At that moment a man suddenly sprung from the gloom by the roadside and gripped the horses by the reins. I saw him bear them back, inch by inch, and then, just as my senses for-

sook me, I saw him by the carriage. How long, insensible, I lay there, I can only now tell, for the hour is late. But, when I recovered my senses, I found my horses tied securely to the stock of an old tree, by the wayside; but of the villains or the man who had borne the horses back from the precipice, and of Miss Grace, I could see nothing!"

We will not attempt to portray the anguish of the stricken father; nor the wretchedness that prevailed that night in the Harley mansion.

The next day the papers were filled with accounts of the terrible outrage. After detailing, in the usual high-flown language, the enormity of the crime, they went on to speak of the man who had so opportunely arrested the flying steeds. He had indeed become a hero, for the daily journals referred to him, and one concluded its article thus:

"The name of the gallant fellow, who, by a superhuman effort, forced back the fiery steeds, and saved Miss Harley, daughter of our esteemed citizen, Richard Harley, Esq., of Alleghany City—saved her, alas! it may be for a worse fate—has been found out to be Tom Worth. The man is a common laborer, in the Black Diamond coal mine; and though his name and calling be humble, yet it should not be forgotten by a generous public and those who recognize and love true heroism!"

CHAPTER VI.

OLD BEN, THE MINER.

OLD Ben Walford, the veteran miner, walked slowly up and down the limits of his little cabin, nestled on the verge of the Coal Hills.

It was late at night, and a single lamp alone illumined the darkness of the small apartment. The old man paused occasionally in his promenade to listen to the wind, which sighed and sung so mournfully around the corners, and under the eaves of his little cabin. But, shaking his head, he again resumed his walk; he had heard no welcoming step outside, crunching along toward his lonely little tenement, and was getting impatient and anxious.

Old Ben, the miner, as he was generally known, was a "character" around Pittsburgh—or, rather, in his little circumscribed world there. Almost everybody knew him, and all who did know him respected him for his worth, independence and real nobleness of character. In the working of a mine, in any particular, whether in sinking a shaft, or making a level, or indicating the rise and dip of a coal "drift," the old man's judgment was sought and heeded; for his opinions were based on a quarter century's experience in the far-away celebrated Cornish mines, and his decisions were, in every instance, sound and trustworthy. Yet, in giving his "opinions," he was unpretentious and simple as one of the little "rolley-boys" of the mine.

Although so many knew Ben, and knew him so well, yet, strange as it may appear, they indeed knew very little of him. He did not have many acquaintances—that is of his own choosing and making, and he cared only for a very few friends. Among these friends was one who has been mentioned in this veracious story—Tom Worth, the young miner, who, it seemed, worked day by day along with Ben in the Black Diamond mines, lying next to the Great Alleghany shafts.

These two men, one over a half-century in years, the other little past one-third so old, were very intimate, though they differed so much in personal appearance and attributes, and in almost every other particular save in lofty and powerful physique. How true they were to one another—how devoted and disinterested their friendship, will be seen in the course of this romance.

The two men were strangers to each other—the younger having just entered the mine as a laborer—when, on a certain day, as one of them was lighting a fuse for blasting away some obstruction in the shaft, about midway down, the light by some means was applied too soon. The explosion was imminent, and the bucket, which hung near, was too small to convey both men at once away.

The two strong men shuddered, as they saw certain death staring them in the face, for it was certain death to abide the springing of the powder-charge; and they stood in mute despair, gazing at the fuse, burning nearer, nearer to the fatal fulminate.

"Go, Tom!" said the old man, in a low voice, pointing to the bucket. "Go! I am old, and my days are almost over, anyway! You are young and can be happy! Go!"

Thus spoke the old miner.

"No, Ben, no! Into the bucket with you! You are old and shall die in peace! I am already old in the world's misery, with not a living soul to miss me when I am gone. Go, go, Ben! and think of me once, when I am dead!"

So spoke the younger man.

"Never!" returned old Ben, and the fuse now flashing and scintillating, and the terrible powder only three inches away from the greedy, creeping fire.

"Nay, but by heavens! you shall, old man!" and with a bound the young man sprung forward, clutched the old man by the waist, and,

with a giant's strength, landed him safe into the bucket, giving the signal at the same time to those above to hoist away!

As the bucket shot rapidly upward toward daylight and safety, the young man, deep down in the black shaft, bowed his head and waited.

Then came the deafening shock, and the earth itself seemed to quake.

Ten minutes of awful silence, and then the bucket was slowly lowered again; in it, like an iron man, sat old Ben Walford—his eyes staring down far below him, in the smoke and gloom, his brawny neck pulsating under the heavy strokes of the arteries beating in it.

Down, down! The old man could not go fast enough; and now the place has been reached; and, yes, God be thanked! what joy rioted in the old man's bosom then!

There, under an artificial arch of stone, made by the powerful blast itself, crouched the powder-scorched and grimy man, Tom Worth—the noble! untouched, unharmed, safe!

And there, in the darkness of that black shaft—there in the terrible solitude, in that deep pit in the earth—the old Cornish miner drew the young man to his bosom, and in a scarcely audible, husky voice, murmured:

"THANK GOD!"

Such was the tale the miners would tell you—with an almost reverential manner—of the great friendship between Ben, the old Cornwall miner, and Tom Worth.

Still old Ben paced up and down the narrow confines of his snug little cabin—occasionally waiting by the door, and listening, as if for some welcome sound to reach his ears.

Ben Walford, the miner, was verging onto sixty-two years of age, and yet we would not think so old, judging from the vigorous growth of iron-gray hair that clustered on his broad, furrowed forehead, and fell in unrestrained masses upon his neck. Much less would we judge him so, from the magnificent muscle and brawn of that erect, towering, athletic figure. Yet old Ben said so himself, and there was no denying it.

And this evening the soot and grime of the mine were washed away, showing a remarkably fine face—at once indicative of firmness, honesty, candor, courage and gentleness. A fine-looking, good-looking, hearty old man was Ben Walford, the miner.

He suddenly paused again, and stepping to the door, opened it and peered out into the darkness for several minutes. Then he closed the door again, shutting the cold, disagreeable air out from his warm cabin.

"Confound it!" he muttered. "Strange that boy don't come! I haven't seen his dear face since yesterday morning in the west gallery. Has he come to harm in the pit?—has he—no, no, for he left the mine at four o'clock in the afternoon—so the overseer told me. And then last night, all night long, I waited for him, and kept his supper hot for him, and he didn't come! Nor to-day! What can be the matter? And there, on the fire now, is his supper, waiting for him to come and eat it!"

"There's something strange about Tom Worth," and the old man sunk his voice even lower than usual. "Something that is very queer, and he has never told it to me! Is he afraid to trust his secret with old Ben? No, no! He's an honest boy—a good boy, and if he wishes to say nothing to me, why, of course it's all right, and—Ha! here he is, at last!" and the old man bounded to the door and let down the latch, as a heavy step echoed harsh and loud along the narrow, flinty mountain path, alongside of which the cabin was perched.

In a moment there came a loud rap at the door. The old man paused and started back.

"Very strange!" he muttered. "Come in, Tom, my boy," he continued, opening the door. "What do you mean by rapping at—Ah! Is it you, Mr. Somerville? Come in, sir, and tell me how I can serve you," and the old man's face wrinkled into a dark frown, as the hawk-like, saturnine features of Fairleigh Somerville slowly emerged from the gloom, and showed in the dim light of the miner's solitary lamp.

CHAPTER VII.

AN UNWELCOME VISITOR.

A HEAVY, vindictive frown sat likewise on the face of the young millionaire, and a dare-devil, independent look glanced from his eyes, as he unhesitatingly entered the room, and glared quickly around him.

He unbuttoned his overcoat, shook from it the heavy, cold mist, and removing his cap from his close-cut hair, struck it several times over his knee to get the moisture from it.

The old miner glanced at him suspiciously, but fearlessly, and a still darker and more ominous frown came over his scarred face as he noticed the cool, overbearing deportment of this strange visitor.

"Well, sir," he said, boldly but respectfully, "if it suits you to speak now, please say on, and tell me what brings you here. I am at your service, sir, but you need not be told, Mr. Somerville, that a miner's time is precious, and sleep very grateful after twelve hours spent two hun-

dred feet below the ground in a bad, unwholesome air."

As he spoke, the old miner seated himself rather impatiently opposite his visitor.

"In my own good time, Ben Walford—in my own good time! I am not used to being hurried," replied Somerville, with the utmost *sang froid*, coolly stretching his limbs—which, by the by, seemed to have recovered entirely from his hurts of the night before.

Old Ben's heavy right hand contracted fearfully as he half-rose from his chair; but he controlled himself, and quietly sat down again.

It was not the sight of a heavy revolver protruding from young Somerville's overcoat pocket that deterred the old man; he simply obeyed the better teachings of his nature.

"Very good, Mr. Somerville," he said, quietly; "take your own time; if I wished to hurry you, you know the reason. But please remember," and the old man's voice grew stern, "that Fairleigh Somerville and Ben the miner are not over-warm friends! I cannot forget, sir, how you endeavored to injure me by trying to have me discharged from the 'Black Diamond'—simply, too, because you could not bribe me into the 'Great Alleghany!'"

"Enough, enough, old man! That is past and gone, and let it be kept out of sight! I come on other business."

"Then out with it, sir, and remember this is my cabin, my home, and that, living in a free country, I am a freeman—one at all times ready to defend life and character!"

The old man looked at the other unflinchingly and menacingly as he spoke.

"Tut! tut! old man; you are on a 'high-horse' without a cause," said Somerville; "I come on business, I tell you—to make some inquiries of you, not to quarrel with you." He straightened up in his seat, and faced the other more respectfully.

"As I said before, very good, sir," answered Ben; "time is precious with me, for it is worth more to me than money—it is health."

"Ha! I did not know that you were a philosopher, as well as a miner, Ben Walford; but," he changed his tone, as he saw the ruddy flush of anger spreading over the insulted old man's face, "I am here, on this miserable, nasty night, on business—that business with your room-mate," and he looked straight at the other.

"My room-mate?"

"Yes. Does not Tom Worth live here with you?"

"He does. I am expecting him now every minute, and thought a bit ago that your footstep was his. What do you want with Tom Worth, Mr. Somerville? He's an honest man, and he'll not be bribed in the 'Great Alleghany,' if that's what you come for, I can tell you!"

"Blast the 'Great Alleghany' and Tom Worth, too!" exclaimed Somerville, angrily.

"I'd advise you," said Ben, in a low but distinct voice, "not to let Tom Worth hear you say such of him; and I tell you again, sir, this is my cabin."

Fairleigh Somerville saw that he was going too far. So with a light laugh he said, apologetically:

"A slip-of-the-tongue, that meant nothing, Ben. But time flies. Have you heard that Tom Worth saved Miss Grace Harley from death last night?"

"Yes, sir; I read it in the papers. Tom is the man to do that thing. He has nerve and muscle; but the papers said the horses were yours, Mr. Somerville! Where were you, and what were you doing on the mountain at that time of night and in such weather?"

"By Heaven, you're bold and impudent, old man! What business is that to you? And Tom Worth, if he tells the truth—"

"He never lies!" fairly hissed the old man.

"Well, then, he'll tell you that I was knocked down, senseless, by one of the ruffians. But to business: I believe Tom Worth to be the third villain, and that he has abducted Miss Harley!"

Old Ben Walford sprung to his feet, his eyes fairly flashing fire.

"Heed well your words, Fairleigh Somerville! In matters of this sort, Tom Worth is Ben Walford, and what you say of him I will take to myself! Tom Worth is an honest man, if one walks on God's green earth. And—I am bold to say it—perhaps you know something of this affair, more than Tom, save that he acted the part of a man!"

In an instant Somerville sprung to his feet, and his hand fell on the butt of his pistol, his face half-livid, half-pale, yet working and writhing with passion. But he was not too quick for old Ben Walford. The latter had kept his eye, as he spoke, upon his visitor, and as he saw the other grasp his pistol, he suddenly drew from his bosom a pistol, likewise, and covered the young man's breast with its black muzzle.

"Let go your pistol, Fairleigh Somerville," he said, in a low, determined voice, keenly watching the other the while, "or my finger will pull the trigger!"

Somerville slowly removed his hand, and his face, as he did so, was as white as a gravestone. He rose to his feet.

"I came to see this young man," he said, in a tremulous voice, though his eyes glared like

those of a buffalo-tiger, "and learn from him, which it were not difficult to do—for innocence needs no defense—if the part he played in this affair was simply the heroic! If it was, I intended to reward him myself, that was all."

"And I tell you, sir," replied the old man, slowly putting his pistol away, "take your lesson to yourself, and learn this, that Tom Worth accepts no money but that for which he works and gains honestly. That is more than many can say!"

You speak bravely, old man," said Somerville, a little tartly, now that the pistol was removed; "and I'll say to you that this matter shall not drop here; I will see if this fellow was implicated in that affair. I'll spend every dollar I have, if needed, in the effort, and if he is guilty he shall be punished! Do you understand that?"

"Yes, and I laugh at you! Tom Worth's character, thank God! is not in your hands. And now, sir, you had better leave this cabin, else—I am in earnest, sir!—you'll come to grief!" The old man now spoke very sternly.

Without a word, Somerville turned away. As he did so he glanced at a photograph, hanging in a common gilded frame, on the rude wall.

This photograph represented an elegant-looking young fellow, clad in rich attire, with a high, broad brow, clustering auburn ringlets, a heavy yellow mustache, and large blue eyes.

Somerville started violently and paused at the sight of that photograph.

"Who is that?" he asked, in a low voice, still gazing at the picture.

"That? Why, it's Tom Worth," said old Ben, "taken five years ago, when he had money, though he was none the more honest then than now, when he is rough and dirty."

Without another word, Somerville left the house and strode away at a rapid pace.

"Hells and furies!" he muttered. "I've seen his face before! Now, he must shoulder the blame! I will crush him, else—"

The rest of this sentence was lost, as he hurried away down the hill. On his way he passed a tall, athletic man, striding rapidly up; but Somerville paid no heed to him. In five minutes afterward this same tall man entered the cabin on the mountain.

"Thank God, Tom, that you are here at last!" said old Ben, the miner, as the door closed.

CHAPTER VIII.

LORDLY WEALTH AND HONEST POVERTY.

DESPITE the fact that the old miner had told Fairleigh Somerville that his time was precious to him, yet it was nearly twelve o'clock that night before he rose from his chair, opposite Tom Worth, who sat on the other side of the open, glowing grate, and said:

"That man Somerville is a rascal, Tom; but now we'll go to bed; 'tis late."

In a few moments the light was extinguished, and there was silence in the miner's cabin.

The conversation that night between Tom Worth and his friend, old Ben Walford, was a long one—an earnest one.

More than once the old miner had uttered an exclamation of surprise, and once, in a lull, he had said:

"I tell you again, Tom, that Somerville is no friend of yours! He has money, too, and if occasion comes, will use it against you! Do you know of any reason why he should have this spite against you?"

"He knows that I am your friend, Ben, and that neither of us would quit our old employers, and go into the 'Great Alleghany.' That is the reason—perhaps."

Tom Worth had said that "perhaps" significantly—in fact, as if he himself did not believe what he was saying; but old Ben did not notice this.

The night passed—the gray dawn came—the heavy mist, and gloom, and darkness were rolling away from the black bosoms of three rivers, uniting three in one.

From the numerous cabins on the mountain-side dark forms were issuing, and already the lofty, narrow ledge-paths of the tall hill were lively with groups of sooty miners hurrying along to their work, to relieve the "night-shift."

From the door of Ben Walford's little cabin Tom Worth and his sturdy old friend had some time since gone out. They were faithful laborers and early risers, and lingered not when the hours of work were upon them.

They took their way rapidly along the murky path, exchanging monosyllabic words of greeting with their fellow-workmen hastening on, like them, to bury themselves the live-long day deep down in the pits, and galleries, and levels of the coal-mines.

Our two friends reached the shaft, and having lit the little lamps attached to their hats, were about to enter the bucket to be lowered away, when the overseer called Tom Worth to him and gave him a letter, telling him it had come to the office late the night before.

The young man took the missive, and drawing to one side, tore it open and read it. As his eyes fell on the hard, smooth page and glanced over the black, business-like characters written thereon, the young man started; but he read on, un-

til he had finished it. Then drawing, respectfully, near the overseer, he said:

"I would like to be excused to-day, Mr. Hayhurst. Mr. Harley wishes to see me, sir."

"Very good, Tom; but be back as soon as you can; you know you missed yesterday." The overseer spoke kindly.

"Yes, sir; but, sir, you can stop my wages for the two days, sir," said Tom.

"Stop your wages! Not a bit of it, my man! Not a bit of it! We all know, Tom," he continued, "of your gallantry of night before last on the mountain, and no man who can do such deeds shall have his pay stopped for any cause." The overseer spoke promptly and decidedly. The men standing around showed their approval in a loud murmur; but old Ben Walford said right out:

"Spoken like a man—as we all know you to be—Mr. Hayhurst! Good-by, Tom," he continued, stepping into the large "cage" after the other men; "we'll expect you soon," and the huge bucket, with a creak and a rattle, disappeared from view.

Tom Worth, now all alone, for the overseer had turned into the coal-breaker, drew out the letter, and by the light still burning from the lamp on his hat, again perused the missive. It was not a long communication, and it read as follows:

"No. — Stockton Avenue, Alleghany City,
Nov. 29, 1859.

"TOM WORTH,

"Laborer at the 'Black Diamond' Mine:—

"I see by the papers that you acted well, and at the risk of your own life, in saving my daughter from certain destruction on the night of the accident on Mount Washington. I would not let such gallantry go unrewarded. So get an excuse from the overseer, and come to see me as early as you can to-morrow. Though nearly distracted over the loss of my child, yet I have reason and gratitude enough left me to be able to thank you fully, and to reward you well.

"(Signed)

RICHARD HARLEY."

There was no condescension shown in this note—not at all—though it did seem as if the better nature was struggling against the conventionalities of society—its rank and position. It will be observed that Mr. Harley did not write "Dear Sir," nor even the colder, more formal "Sir," at the top of his smooth sheet. Nor at the bottom did he say "gratefully," or "truly," or even "respectfully yours," but simply attached his signature.

Mr. Harley wished Tom Worth to understand that, in inviting him to his princely mansion, the rich ex-iron merchant did not compromise his own position in society, nor elevate him, Tom Worth, from his, in the coal-mine.

His idea was to pay the man a sum in golden dollars or crispy bank-notes, and at the same time to learn from him as much as possible in regard to the fate of his daughter, or to draw out from Tom some suggestions as to her fate. That was all, and so Tom Worth fully understood it. He smiled bitterly as he carefully re-folded the letter, pushed aside his long, tawny beard, sooty and soiled, and thrust the missive into his jacket-pocket.

That day, about half-past nine o'clock, a tall man, with auburn hair, and large blue eyes, his face almost entirely covered with a luxuriant mass of yellow beard and whiskers, turned into Stockton avenue, in Alleghany City. The man was clad in rather coarse attire—heavy boots on his feet, a rough overcoat, and pantaloons of cheap though good material.

Pausing before the gate of the Harley mansion, he hesitated for a moment, and then walking up the graveled walk to the door, rung the bell with decided energy. The broad hall within speedily echoed to hasty steps. Then the door was opened, and a man in rich livery stood before him.

"Your business?" he asked, gruffly, scrutinizing the coarse garb of him who had polluted the silver door-knob by his plebeian touch.

"To your master I'll tell it; is he at home?"

The servant's face in an instant reddened.

"I have no master, I can tell you, my fine fellow!" he said. "Mr. Harley is my employer!"

"'Tis all one; is he at home?"

"Yes, but—"

"All right; I have a letter from him, requesting me to call. Is he at home for visitors?"

"Yes, sir! Excuse me! Come in," and the servant at once changed his deportment, bowed the man into the house, and then into the gorgeous parlor.

As he entered this apartment, Tom Worth—it was he—started, trembled. Glancing around him quickly, he strode across the room to the opposite wall, on which hung a portrait of Grace Harley—an elegant work of art, portraying the young girl in all her ravishing beauty when seventeen years of age.

For a whole minute the miner stood there, gazing at the picture glowing on the canvas, which seemed as if it might also speak to him. He heeded not the elegance and extravagant show of wealth by which he was surrounded; but gazed into the angelic face suspended above him, and, with clasped hands, murmured:

"Oh, Grace! God be with you in your dark

hour. You shall be saved! Will it be for me to—"

The returning footsteps of the servant warned him that other ears were not far off. He quickly seated himself as the man appeared and said:

"Mr. Harley is now ready to receive you—follow me."

Taking up his coarse hat, the miner strode close behind the servant to the library.

Mr. Harley was standing contentedly before the open grate, his hands behind him. He glanced with a keen scrutiny at his visitor.

Lordly Wealth and honest Poverty stood face to face.

CHAPTER IX.

TOM WORTH'S OPINION.

TOM WORTH stood quietly in that majestic presence; he was not at all abashed, but rather he seemed to draw up his own superb, stalwart form, more loftily.

For a moment the old gentleman gazed upon his visitor; and then, fondling his seals, which dangled in profusion over his richly-clad bosom, he said, as if forgetting himself:

"Be seated, my man—Mr. Worth—I suppose that is your name?"

"Yes, sir; but if your business with me is brief, I prefer to stand," said Tom Worth, glancing with some hauteur at the rich man, who, though he pointed his visitor to a seat, made no sign of taking one himself.

"Ah! excuse me! Please be seated, Mr. Worth. I desire to have a little talk with you," and the rich old gentleman set the example and took a seat himself.

Tom took the proffered chair, retaining his coarse hat between his hands.

"Will you take some refreshments, sir—a little Spanish wine perhaps?" said the rich man, evidently constrained into respect and deference by the deportment of his guest.

"No, sir, thank you," returned the other; "I have breakfasted well."

Mr. Harley started as he heard the words, spoken so courteously—so correctly.

"Your voice sounds strangely familiar to me, Mr. Worth. Have I seen you before?" suddenly asked Mr. Harley.

It was now Tom Worth's time to be startled. For a moment, and a moment only, a flush passed over his face. It was quickly gone.

"No doubt, sir; I have been in Pittsburg for many months, and I have often seen you, sir."

"Yes, yes; and were you born here?" persisted Mr. Harley.

"I was born, not here, but—"

"Where did you come from, then?" asked the old gentleman.

Tom Worth reddened again, and bit his lip, viciously, but the angry gesture was hid beneath the heavy mustache that shaded his mouth, and swept down, far over the hirsute chin.

"Many, many miles from here, Mr. Harley; but, sir, 'tis a long story to tell, and my life is far from being an interesting one. You sent for me to make inquiries concerning your daughter?"

The old man felt the rebuke.

"Thank you!" he said, deeply, and this time, the real man—the father, spoke; "thank you, Mr. Worth, for your reminder. I sent for you to ask you what you knew of that outrageous affair—of the part you took in it, and to show my gratitude to you, for your noble conduct. Alas! alas! my poor, dear child!"

"I sincerely hope all may be well with her, Mr. Harley," said Tom Worth, sympathizingly. He spoke very earnestly, very warmly, and the old man again glanced at him. But Tom Worth had bowed his head low down, his eyes were invisible.

At length he looked up, his face calm and imperturbable.

"As time is precious with me, Mr. Harley—I am a laboring man, you know, sir—I will tell you, in a few words, all I know of this painful affair."

"Yes, Mr. Worth, go on."

"I was detained from going to my cabin, night before last, by certain circumstances, and found myself on the Mount Washington road up on the ledge. I was seated by the roadside when I heard wheels. The vehicle evidently was going at a rapid pace. I looked up. As I did so, I saw two forms dart out from the roadside, and dash for the carriage—an open buggy. One of them clutched the horses by the bridle; the other went straight to the carriage. A lady and gentleman sat in that carriage. A struggle ensued, in which the gentleman either fell from the vehicle, or was hurled from it."

Tom Worth paused as he emphasized "fell," but continued at once:

"The horses took fright, and broke by the man who stood at their head. I had remained still, until now, scarcely able to realize matters. But suddenly my energies were aroused, and as the frightened horses dashed past me, straight for the brink of the precipice, I sprang forward, caught them by the head-reins, and by severe efforts, succeeded in checking them. Pressing them safely back, and quieting them, I ap-

proached the carriage. The lady was paralyzed with fear, and that lady, sir, was Gr—your daughter. At that moment I was struck senseless. When I recovered my reason—and an hour must have elapsed—I found no one on the road save myself."

He paused.

"Is that all you know, my good man, of this terrible affair?"

Tom Worth did not answer at once. As a shade of anxiety passed over his face, he pondered. Then he answered promptly:

"How could I know more, Mr. Harley? Remember, I had gone down under the blow—that my senses had forsaken me."

"True, true; and, Mr. Worth, what were you doing—did you say?—on the mountain?"

An angry flush passed over Tom Worth's face, but he controlled himself, though he answered very sternly:

"On my own business, sir."

"Ah! exactly," said Mr. Harley, looking foolish.

Several moments elapsed in silence. Tom Worth, glancing around him, rose to go.

"One moment, one moment, Mr. Worth," exclaimed the old gentleman, unwilling to let him go; "have you thought on this subject any—have you formed an opinion?"

And his eyes strained into the other's face, as if endeavoring to gain from it some clew, some hope.

The miner hesitated, while a dark scowl wrinkled his handsome, honest face; but he sat down again.

"It is not for me, a poor man, an humble miner, Mr. Harley, to have any opinion at all in a matter of this sort. I chanced to be on the mountain, and saw what transpired. Had I not been there, of course I would have known nothing of it," was his singular reply.

"All true, Mr. Worth," continued the old man, still hoping as it were against hope—longing for some information, however meager, in regard to the whereabouts of his daughter; "but, sir, you are a man of judgment—you must be, from your courage and nerve. It is hardly possible that you have not an opinion in this matter. Tell me if you have."

Tom Worth pondered again; his face was very serious, and now and then it contracted, as thought after thought crowded through his mind.

"I am a poor man, Mr. Harley, though thus far I am an honest one; but, sir," he said, suddenly, "my word is nothing when money can be brought against it."

"What mean you?" demanded the old gentleman.

"—And my opinion, coming as it would, from a poor man's lips, is simply worth nothing," continued the miner, unheeding the interruption.

"Again, what do you mean?" asked the rich man.

"—Though, for all that, I have my opinion, Mr. Harley," said the miner, finishing his sentence and paying no attention to the old man's questions.

"Well, what is your opinion?" asked Mr. Harley.

"I should have more properly said—suspicions, sir," said Worth, quietly.

"Suspicions! and of what?" asked the old gentleman, starting violently.

"Suspicions, sir, as to the motive prompting this fiendish outrage," and the scowl on Tom Worth's face grew blacker; "likewise as to who committed that glaring crime, right here in the midst of a great city."

And Tom Worth gazed fixedly and unflinchingly into the rich man's face.

Old Mr. Harley sprung to his feet.

"Say you so, say you so, my good man? Make good your suspicions and surmises, and you can command my purse for any amount. And here now, beforehand, for your gallantry on the hill, accept this purse. It contains bank-notes to the amount of five hundred dollars. Take it, sir."

And he thrust the well-filled purse into the miner's hand.

But Tom Worth's fingers did not close over that purse, within which the new bank-notes crisped and crackled; he put it away from him with a motion of disgust, with a firmness so decided that it was almost rude.

"No, sir! my conduct cannot be made marketable, Mr. Harley! I cannot even thank you for the offer, for it is an insult to an honest man's pride and sense of duty."

The old ex-merchant recoiled with amazement, almost speechless with astonishment. Never before had he met such a man!

"What!" he gasped; "not take money, and you so poor, as you, yourself, say!"

"True, sir, I will not take the money, and, though very poor, am still rich enough to refuse your offer."

The old man sat down, almost beside himself with astonishment and incredulity. Recovering, however, from his stupor, he looked up and said:

"Very good, then, Mr. Worth; but, sir, tell me if you please what you suspect in regard to this matter."

"The prompting motive, sir, was a contempt—"

ible one—a dark one—one which you, a rich man, may surmise."

And Tom Worth looked straight at the old man.

"I understand you, sir," said the father, in a slow, labored voice, as the red blood flowed away from his cheeks; "and, my good man, the PERPETRATOR!"

And his voice sunk to a whisper.

"One, sir, of whom you think a great deal—one who has money; none less, sir, than your fr—"

At that moment a loud ring on the bell startled them, and in a second a note was handed in.

The old gentleman took it, opened it half-impatiently as if he disliked the interruption.

As his eyes fell upon the sheet a sudden frown wrinkled his face. He glanced fiercely at Tom Worth, then nervously, anxiously at the clock, and a smile of angry satisfaction swept over his face.

Just then heavy steps echoed on the graveled walk outside, coming from the street, and then the bell rung again.

In a minute more the hall of the rich man's house was filled with men, and old Richard Harley rubbed his hands with joy.

CHAPTER X.

INSNARED.

It may be well for us at this point to return briefly to the mountain road that dreary night, which witnessed there the outrage recorded.

When her unknown friend in her hour of greatest danger—and the reader knows that friend, though the maiden did not—had sprung forward and caught the horses, Grace Harley, overcome by terror, swooned and sunk down moaning in the foot of the carriage.

It is true, she did not swoon until, as she thought, her protector had suddenly disappeared.

Grace was awakened by some one dashing water in her face from a cup which had been improvised as a basin.

She shivered and struggled to her feet, but quickly sunk backward on the seat with a groan of terror and a half-shriek of alarm.

She had only time to glance around her, but that glance revealed to her three figures—one standing on each side of the carriage, and the third being erect in the buggy. He it was who held the cup of water and was endeavoring to restore her to consciousness.

In another moment a rough bandage was thrown rudely over her eyes, and then, in an instant, a gag was slipped between her teeth and secured, and her slender wrists were bound viciously together. All this occupied but a moment and before the girl could utter a note of alarm or cry for help.

For a moment a hurried conversation was carried on by her captors in a tone so low and guarded that she heard not a single word, nor even the tones of the men sufficiently distinct for her to recognize them if she should know them.

At the end of this conference the party evidently separated, for the girl heard steps moving away.

Only a few moments elapsed before she recognized the crunching of wheels on the hard road and the rough tones of a man, speaking in a subdued voice to the horse. The vehicle paused by the light carriage. The maiden was at once lifted from the latter, and in an instant a soft cord was passed around her ankles, entirely preventing the use of her limbs, being now literally "bound hand and foot."

Then she was placed inside the vehicle, which, it was plain to her, from its roominess, was an open spring or Jersey wagon. She was laid on the hard bottom of the wagon, and a heavy cloak thrown over her.

Her efforts were vain, and in a kind of half-stupor she lay still, scarcely breathing, praying at the same time to die and be rid of this worse than death. Then she heard a man ascend to the broad board front of the wagon body, which served as a seat; and then another mounted likewise.

In a moment, regardless of the comfort of the tender maiden lying so helpless in the wagon, the driver lashed the horse, and away they rattled at a break-neck pace down the steep mountain road.

At length the wagon came down to a more moderate pace; then it was evident that, at last, they were going down the sharp declivity of the Mount Washington road toward the Smithfield street bridge.

Continuing on for a few minutes the wagon suddenly rolled over hard, smooth, well-worn timbers, and paused.

Then the voice of the toll-keeper sounded strangely familiar on the poor girl's ear, and she, though but a few feet from him, could not appeal to him.

"Where are you bound, Tom?" asked the man, as he was handing the change back to the fellow who drove the horse.

"My name's in everybody's mouth! But I am bound on my own business, and *that's* not yours!" was the rough reply in a harsh voice, as the speaker struck the horse, and the wagon moved on.

Under the flaring gas-lamp this man bore a striking resemblance to Tom Worth.

Once across the bridge, the wagon again rattled on over the pavement of the street. It turned here and there, tore around this corner and climbed that hill, as Grace Harley could easily tell by the swaying and swinging of the vehicle and by the manner in which she was thrown so rudely from side to side.

On and on went the wagon, first into this street, then into that; now going at a rapid pace, now slowly climbing a long, laborious hill, now descending this same hill.

Still no word had been spoken by those grim men who carried the maiden away, a silent, unresisting prisoner.

At length the wagon paused, and one of the men sprung to the ground. In an instant creaking chains were heard and low words spoken to the panting horse. Then the man speedily remounted and struck the animal with the whip. Again the wagon rattled on. Something had broken about the harness.

The vehicle was now going up another long, steep hill. The wheels creaked, and the labored breathing of the horse told that the ascent was heavy.

The air grew fresher, and the wind howled dismally through the open cracks in the wagon, and with its damp breath chilled the maiden through and through.

Louder wailed the wind; colder grew its wet breath. It was plain to the girl that they were approaching some sparsely-settled portion of the city—most probably the top of some one of the big hills surrounding the place, or, it might be, in the country.

The girl shuddered.

Suddenly, with a creak and a groan from the wheels, and a deep, labored pant from the horse, the wagon paused. The men leaped quickly to the ground, lifted the cramped form of the girl from her painful posture, and unbinding her feet, but leaving the blindfold and the gag on, and her wrists secured, bore her from the wagon.

The ominous click of a lock sounded on the air. The girl felt herself borne into a warmer, more genial atmosphere.

She was placed upon her feet. The men retreated and locked the door behind them.

Grace Harley was all alone in that dark, silent room.

CHAPTER XI.

THE STROKE.

THE letter which old Richard Harley had received that morning when he talked with Tom Worth, the miner, in his rich library, was brief, but it was startling in import. It ran thus:

"DEAR MR. HARLEY:—

"I write in haste. I learn that you have sent for one Tom Worth, a miner. If you value your daughter's safety, and long for a retributive justice, when he comes, see to it that he does not leave your house before eleven o'clock. In one word, *he* is the villain, after all! I am myself, from certain circumstances recently transpiring, satisfied that *he* planned the abduction of your sweet daughter.

"Again I beg you to keep him until eleven o'clock, when I will arrive, with officers.

"Truly and sympathizingly yours,
FAIRLEIGH SOMERVILLE."

The reader will now doubtless understand the vengeful glance old Richard Harley had cast at his rough-looking visitor, and will likewise know why the ex-merchant consulted the clock-dial so nervously. For it must be remembered that the interview was at an end, and Tom Worth had risen for the third time to his feet, to go.

When the bell had sounded, and the hall was filled with a body of men, old Mr. Harley sprung to his feet, and facing Tom Worth, exclaimed, as he shook his finger menacingly in his face:

"Wait, villain! you are wanted!"

"What do you mean, sir?" asked the miner, as a scowl passed over his face.

He glanced around him. But he could say no more, nor take a step in any direction, even were he so inclined; for, at that moment, the door of the library was opened, and a squad of police-officers appeared. Among them, in the background, stood Fairleigh Somerville, his face showing a strange admixture of triumph and fear.

Tom Worth's face paled slightly at the sight of the officers, and a flash of appreciation—of a right understanding of the situation of affairs, flitted like lightning over his face. Then there came a quick, angry writhing of that face. This, however, was transitory, and an iron-like composure succeeded it as his gaze sought Fairleigh Somerville's face.

"That is the man, there, my men," said that young gentleman, in a distinct, though rather nervous voice.

"You are my prisoner, Tom Worth!" said one of the officers, advancing at once toward the miner, and laying his hand heavily upon his shoulder. "I arrest you in the name of the Commonwealth!"

"Arrest me! and for what?" demanded the miner, calmly, of the officer.

"For the abduction and forcible detention from her home of Miss Grace Harley," was the prompt reply.

"And upon what grounds, sir? Who is my accuser?"

"On very suspicious grounds, which will be given in evidence, but which cannot be detailed here. Mr. Fairleigh Somerville is your accuser."

And the officer pointed to that individual, who seemed to be endeavoring to shrink away from sight.

The miner glanced at the man, and, while a hot flush passed over his face, said:

"Then Mr. Somerville is a coward and a falsifier, as well as a villain!"

Fairleigh Somerville, as his saturnine visage was suddenly distorted with anger, turned quickly, and striding toward the prisoner, raised a whip which he carried in his hand threateningly over the other's shoulders.

Before the lash descended, however, Tom Worth, with the bound of a lion, sprung forward, shaking off the grasp of the officer. In an instant he had clutched the whip with his left hand, and drawing back his right till the huge muscles of his arm swelled and struggled under his sleeve, he said:

"Dare lay the weight of your smallest finger upon me, you white-livered scoundrel, and I'll throttle you in the very face of the law!"

Trembling in every limb, Somerville let go the whip and retreated hastily behind the police sergeant, who had now stepped forward.

"Enough, enough of this, Tom Worth, or you'll condemn yourself!" said the officer, sternly.

"Away with the villain! Away with him!" exclaimed old Mr. Harley, his face white with passion. "Such impudence in my house!"

"Come, Tom," said the officer, "follow me; give me no trouble, or I'll have to handcuff you!"

An expression of pain passed over the miner's face as he stepped forward obediently by the officer's side.

"Handcuff him? Of course you will!" said Somerville, in a hissing voice. "I demand it!"

"You can demand *nothing* of me, Mr. Somerville," returned the tall policeman, firmly. "The prisoner is in my custody; I am responsible for his safe-keeping, not you. Besides, I know Tom Worth, and am acquainted with his character for honesty and truthfulness. Come, Tom, follow me."

Somerville bit his lips in very rage at the cutting words of the officer, but said nothing.

Tom Worth, shaking with a convulsive shudder, trod close behind the officer—who, beckoning his men to follow him, pushed rudely by old Harley, and Somerville, standing by the door, and left the house.

As they reached a prison-van, which was in waiting, at the street gate, the policeman turned and said:

"Mr. Somerville, you are expected to be at the alderman's office, in Penn street, this afternoon, at four o'clock."

He was about directing Tom to get into the van, when the prisoner asked:

"Will you allow me, sir, to go over to my cabin, to get a few necessary things to serve me in jail?"

"Certainly, my man," replied the officer, promptly, "but I hardly think it will be as bad as that. From what I have heard of you, I am sure you have a friend who will bail you."

"No, sir; I *must* go to jail; I do not wish bail. I will go to jail and await justice; it will come, *some day*."

The policeman said no more; but when Tom Worth had entered the disreputable van, he entered also, having first directed the driver to go over the river to Tom's cabin, as the prisoner had requested.

The news of Tom Worth's arrest, for the abduction of Miss Grace Harley, spread like wild-fire through Pittsburg. It was duly announced in the afternoon papers, and various were the comments made upon the news. Among Tom's acquaintances, the miners, the excitement was intense. He was widely and well known, not only in his own mine—the Black Diamond—but in many others, among the Coal Hills, and his arrest fell upon them with a stunning force.

It were difficult to tell the effect of these woe-ful tidings on old Ben Walford. When the old man first heard it he was deep down in one of the levels of the mine. A miner who had heard the news at the shaft came by and told him. The old man paused as if shot, and a terrible shudder crept over him.

Before he had recovered himself, and before he could ask any questions, the man had passed on.

There was an iron rigidity about old Ben's face, as, without another word to his wondering companions, the old man turned off. As he pursued his way swiftly through the dark, underground "streets" toward the shaft, he muttered:

"'Tis false! 'tis false! My boy is no scoundrel, and young Somerville *is*. He is at the bottom of this, I know. I'll not doubt my boy—never!"

He reached the shaft, and signaling for the bucket, was soon on the outside world again. The old man at once sought out Mr. Hayhurst, the overseer.

That gentleman had just read the news in the paper and was sitting now, with brooding countenance, gazing vacantly at his feet.

"Bad news, Ben!—that of Tom—and 'tis hard to believe. But, then, it comes straight. You know young Somerville—"

"Is a scoundrel, Mr. Hayhurst!" blurted old Ben, right out.

"Not so loud, Ben, or you may get into trouble."

"I hope, Mr. Hayhurst, you don't believe the story?" said Ben, almost fiercely.

"I don't know *what* to believe, Ben," said Mr. Hayhurst, "but I'll tell you one thing; Tom has always been a good fellow, and he *shall* have justice!"

"Thank you, thank you kindly, Mr. Hayhurst. Yes! he shall have justice!"

"Meet me this afternoon, Ben, at the alderman's office. At all events, I'll see that the poor fellow, guilty or not guilty, does *not* go to jail."

"God bless you, Mr. Hayhurst, for your kind heart! And, depend upon it, I'll be there!"

It may be readily imagined that the alderman's little office was *packed*. It was known all over the city that a preliminary examination of the prisoner would be held there at four o'clock; and as the case, from its very flagrancy, excited much interest and created great indignation, *everybody* seemed anxious to be present and see the man, so humble in life, so well spoken of heretofore, who had been accused as the bold perpetrator of the crime upon law and society.

Hence, long before the hour for the examination, the scene in front of the alderman's office was an animated one. Merchants and miners, ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls—all swelled the crowd—each doing his or her best to perform what was almost an impossibility—to squeeze into the little room, already so full that suffocation of all hands was imminent.

At length the prison van appeared. In a few minutes it forced its way through the crowd and drew up at the alderman's office.

The assembly swayed to and fro, but was suddenly hushed to almost absolute silence, as the prisoner, clad in the same coarse garments in which he had visited the splendid mansion of Richard Harley, Esq., and carrying a bundle under his arm, descended quietly from the van; and, preceded and followed by an officer, entered the office.

As he did so a stentorian voice in the surging crowd shouted aloud:

"I am here, Tom, and will never desert you!"

The poor miner gave a quick, grateful glance around, and saw the powerful form of old Ben Walford performing deeds worthy of Hercules in his mighty endeavors to get closer to him.

And then Tom Worth stood before the alderman.

CHAPTER XII.

THE MEETING IN THE SHINLEY.

OPPOSITE East Common, by Christ Church—the commons and their extensions now known as the Alleghany Parks—and to the right of Nunnery Hill, as you go up Union avenue, is a collection of small, squalid tenement-houses, extending for a considerable distance, and called by the general title of the Shinley Property.

As every city, town and hamlet has a disreputable quarter, so is the Shinley Property the disreputable quarter of Pittsburgh's most charming suburb—Alleghany City. For years this property has borne the name by which it is now known; and in the local annals of Alleghany City it has become quite notorious in many respects, which we need not particularize.

Suffice it to say, that those who *should* know state very emphatically that it were difficult to find a place in any other city of the United States, or of the world, which could, in looseness of life—in the utter depths of infamy—rival the dens and haunts of the wicked and abandoned in the Shinley Property of Alleghany City.

By respectable people there are some parts of this diseased and vice-infected quarter which are shunned, even under the glare of the noonday sun; and after nightfall they would as soon think of wading the Ohio with impunity as to pass through the *purlieus* and lanes of the Shinley Property. In mildest language, it was a *bad* place, and it may perhaps deserve the title that has been bestowed upon it of a *moral fester*.

Be all that as it may, it is into this place we must ask the reader to follow us on the night succeeding the abduction of Grace Harley—the same on which, earlier in the evening, Fairleigh Somerville had visited old Ben, the miner, in his cabin on the mountain.

This night, about an hour after midnight, two men were to be seen picking their way cautiously along the narrow street which lay next to Nunnery Hill. They proceeded but a short distance, when they turned suddenly into a small, dark alley—so narrow that they could not walk abreast singly, but were compelled to go sideways, one after the other. Emerging, however, very soon from the further end of the gloomy passage, they entered a court and approached a flight of rickety stairs, leading, outside, up to the second story staging of a low brick house.

The men rapidly ascended to the staging with-

out looking behind them. In a few moments they were on the staging.

"Make the signal, Teddy," said one of the men, softly.

The man addressed put his hands to his mouth and created a low, flute-like sound or whistle.

A moment only elapsed when, apparently from the remotest depths of the old house, an answer, low and guarded, was returned.

Without waiting, the man called Teddy pushed open the door and entered a dark room beyond, saying:

"'Tis all right, Launce; the boss is here, and we'll get our money. Come!" and both men disappeared within, closing and securing the door behind them.

For a moment they groped around, and finally paused before another door within. On this they gave a peculiar rap. The door was opened at once, and a flood of brilliant light shone forth, illuminating the gloomy depths of the antechamber with a splendor almost startling.

The men at once entered, hat in hand; and then the door closed, as if of its own accord, behind them.

Seated at a table in the comfortable, well-furnished apartment, was a very tall but slender man. A heavy beard of dark hue covered all the lower portion of his face; a slouched hat was drawn well over his eyes, obscuring the upper portion of his face. An overcoat of thick stuff clung loosely around his person, and reached to his feet.

The man's hands were gloved, and over his left shoulder, on the back, was an immense, disfiguring hump.

He was, as the reader well knows, the same mysterious person whom we have seen on a previous occasion, in the old house, on Boyd's Hill, though, if the truth be told, not much of a hump could *then* be seen—certainly not enough to be noticeable.

In front of the man was a large cut-glass decanter and several costly goblets. The odor coming from the unstopped decanter proclaimed it to be brandy. To his right hand lay a heavy revolving pistol, and by it a large portemonnaie.

The man laid down a pencil and pushed aside a scrap of paper, as the two men entered. He had evidently been making notes.

"Here at last, are you?" he exclaimed, in a half-surlly manner.

"We are ahead of time, Mr.—boss," said the man, Teddy, suddenly, as he saw a quick sign of warning from the other.

"Yes, and you always are when you expect money, but not when I want you," continued the man seated by the table, as if determined to find fault.

One of the men seemed inclined to retort, but a glance from his companion restrained him.

"We need money very much, boss, for we have children, you know. Besides, that, we—"

"Confound your children, and you, too! Don't prate to me about them!"

An angry flush flew over the man's dark face, and he dug his nails into the palms of his hands; but he kept back the fierce reply that had already sprung to his lips. And then he said very quietly, almost gently:

"Yes, yes, boss; but our little ones are very dear to us, and we, though rough and *unfortunate* men, hate mightily to hear the little things cry for bread."

Was it that the brute in the long overcoat was softened, that he glanced at the man quickly? or was it that he noticed the poor fellow's emphasis? At all events, he did not pursue the subject further, but contented himself with saying, simply:

"Bah!"

Till this time the men had been standing; but at a sign from him who was evidently their master—in the strongest sense of that word—they seated themselves on a sofa near the table.

Several moments passed in silence—the man who sat by the table paying no heed to the common-looking fellows on the sofa, but looking up at the ceiling and pulling meditatively at his long whiskers. At length, however, he glanced down and said, as if all at once wide-awake:

"Come, Launce; come, you and Teddy, and take a drink—something good. It will warm you up this raw night, and do you no harm," and he drew the decanter near to him, and poured out a large draught in each of the two tumblers.

The man named Launce came at once and approached the table, but the other hesitated and kept his seat.

"Why don't you come, Teddy? I know you love liquor. Ah! You think I will poison you! Ha! ha! No, indeed! I cannot spare you yet, Teddy, and I would not poison you in such good stuff as this! Come, man; here, pour out for yourself, and I will drink the four ounces already in the goblet as a guaranty of good faith."

So saying, he took the glass and tossed off the burning liquor at a gulp, and without a grimace, down his throat.

Teddy waited no longer; he arose at once, and pouring out a large drink, drank it at a swallow, saying at the same time:

"No, no, boss; I wasn't afraid to trust you; but you see, I can't stand much liquor."

"All right," replied the other; "but the less you take the less you can bear," and the tall man laughed, as if he had said something witty. "But now to business!" he continued. "Sit down and tell me what you have heard to-day."

"We have both heard *news*," replied the man Teddy, his face brightening, as the strong brandy darted through his frame.

"And what is it, Teddy?"

"Why, sir, it's all over Alleghany and Pittsburgh, too, that old Harley's daughter has been taken off somewhere and by somebody. But nobody knows much about it."

"You don't say so! This is news! And who was the *somebody*?—did you hear?"

"Why, sir, 'tis not positive, you know; but, sir, they all say it was a fellow called Tom Worth, a miner in the Black Diamond."

"Glorious!" exclaimed the other. "And so Tom Worth did this daring deed?"

"Yes, sir; so 'tis said; and everybody believes it."

"Yes, Teddy, and 'tis very well that everybody *should* believe it," said the master, significantly, "and you and Launce *know why*."

"Of course we do; and you needn't tell us," said the man, somewhat suddenly and rudely. The brandy had evidently crazed him.

The man in the long overcoat reached out his hand suddenly, and grasped his pistol.

"None of your impudence, Teddy," he said, in a deep, stern voice, "or, by heavens, I'll shoot you through the head!"

"Shoot me, would you? Shoot, I say! That's better than to be living the dog's life I now lead! And I such a slave to you, on account of a single cart-load of coal I stole from the mine—stole it to keep my poor wife warm—stole it to keep life and soul together in my dying child! Shoot, shoot! but remember I am ready!" and he drew a pistol from his bosom. "And the day may be near at hand when *your* crimes—"

He did not finish the sentence, for the tall man, suddenly springing over the table, felled him to the floor at one blow with the butt of his pistol. And then, glaring like a tiger, he stood over his fallen foe.

The man called Launce drew near.

"Do not kill him, boss; he is drunk, and he has a wife and children. And, boss, he is of service to you. I'll sober him!"

As he spoke he dragged the man into the adjoining room. Coming back, he filled a bucket with cold water, and returning drenched the senseless wretch with dash after dash of the chilling bath.

The man shivered, recovered his senses, arose to his feet, and staggering back into the room, fell on his knees before him who had punished him, and said, humbly:

"Pardon me, boss—forgive me! Liquor crazes me. I will still serve you."

"'Tis well, Teddy. And I will trust you; but, mark me well, *do not tempt me again*. I'll keep your pistol. Now, here, take your money; and you, too, Launce, and be off! You will find fifty dollars in each roll. 'Tis good pay, but the job was well done, and I am not stingy. Now begone, for 'tis very late!"

The men received their money, and turned toward the door. As the light fell on the man's face—the one called Launce—there he stood! *Tom Worth, the miner, over and over again: the very embodiment in the flesh!*

But in a moment the men were gone; and the old staircase was creaking under their heavy boots.

CHAPTER XIII.

IN THE DOCK.

THERE was a breathless silence in the little office of Alderman March among those who had gathered there to witness the preliminary trial of Tom Worth, the miner, as the officer led the prisoner straight through the crowd, until he stood directly in front of the legal functionary.

The alderman did not hesitate a moment; he cast a glance at the tall, splendid form of the prisoner, who stood so boldly, yet so deferential before him. Then he looked away.

It was difficult to read that glance of the alderman. And even in this humble "limb of the law" there were those watching for signs of evil or good intent—of a prejudiced mind, or of an open, honest judgment, according to the evidence and the law.

Old Ben Walford was one of those who thus scrutinized the almost impassible face of the alderman, and he saw that the glance to which we have referred was kindly, and the old man knew that the alderman, in his heart, sympathized with the prisoner. And the old man was glad.

"What is your name, my man?" the alderman asked, in a kind tone, of the prisoner.

Casting his eyes aloft for a moment, as if thinking away back in the past, while a bitter smile lifted his mustached lip, he said:

"My name, your Honor! Why, *everybody* should know it now! It is *Tom Worth*, your Honor; heretofore a name reckoned honest."

"And honest now, my boy, or there's not one in Pittsburgh!" exclaimed old Ben, who, by prodigies of wriggling, herculean feats of strength, and considerable display of strategy, had worked his way close behind his unfortunate friend.

The alderman's face was, for a moment, wrin-

kled with a frown of displeasure, but it quickly cleared up. Leaning over his desk he said, in a mild, though decided tone:

"Make no further interruptions here, or you shall be removed from the room."

And he shook his finger half-threateningly, half-warningly, at the bold speaker.

"I beg ten thousand pardons, your Honor. I couldn't help it, sir, for—well, sir, I'll not again offend your Honor. Only, sir, let me stay near my poor boy, there."

The old man spoke so honestly, so entirely from the depths of his great heart, that the alderman, simply making a sign of assent, bent his head very closely over the transcript before him again.

And in that "boy's" eye, in a moment, there stood unbidden one large salt tear.

A most impressive silence followed this little episode.

The alderman looked up again and, addressing the prisoner, said:

"I shall propound to you a few questions, Tom Worth, to which you may or may not answer, as it suits you. I am but doing my duty when I tell you to answer nothing when that answer may criminate you."

"Thank you, your Honor; I appreciate your kindness, sir," said the prisoner.

"Do you swear or affirm?"

"Swear, sir," was the prompt reply.

The alderman took a Testament from the table and held it toward him.

"Take off your hat, prisoner, and place your right hand upon this book."

"Surely, your Honor," suddenly and rudely exclaimed young Somerville, pushing forward, "surely, sir, you are not intending to allow a prisoner to testify in his own behalf?"

"Be silent, sir!" said the alderman, sternly. "I am the judge of my own conduct, and shall interpret the law myself."

With a withering look, and not condescending to say another word, the alderman turned from Somerville and administered the required oath to the prisoner.

There was a disposition to applaud this action among those assembled there, for, do what they could, and as prejudiced as many were against the prisoner, they were compelled to admire that lofty, athletic form—that splendid, labor-tanned face of the miner.

But the alderman quickly stopped any such demonstration.

Fairleigh Somerville glanced covertly and viciously around the crowd, and bit nervously at the coarse ends of his swarthy mustache.

"Now, prisoner, please answer as I ask. Where do you work, my man?"

"In the 'Black Diamond' coal mine, your Honor," was the prompt response.

"How long have you worked there?"

"Sixteen months, sir."

The alderman paused.

"Were you on the Mount Washington road on Tuesday night—the night of the abduction?"

"I was, your Honor."

"Then tell what you heard, saw, and did there?"

"Yes, sir. It was about eight o'clock—perhaps not so late. I had been climbing the hill, and, being tired, had seated myself by the roadside away up on the top of the cliff. I suddenly heard carriage-wheels approaching at a rapid pace. Soon the carriage came in sight; and just then I heard some one halloo from the carriage. In an instant two tall, heavy fellows started from the roadside and dashed upon the vehicle."

He paused for a moment and glanced suddenly at Somerville; but he continued:

"A fracas ensued, in the course of which the man who drove the carriage was either thrown or fell from his seat. The horses took fright at once and darted toward the edge of the road, directly for the brink of the precipice. I then sprang forward and stopped the horses, sir, and, sir, saw that a lady was in the vehicle; and that lady was Miss Grace Harley. And then—sir—that's all."

He paused, as he stammered and hesitated at these last words.

There was a hum of voices in the crowd as the plain, straightforward narrative ceased.

"How came you to know Miss Harley, prisoner?" asked the alderman, suddenly.

The torrent of rich red blood that leaped into the miner's sooty, begrimed face was almost fearful, and every one, not excepting Somerville, noticed it keenly. In fact, Fairleigh Somerville glanced viciously at him as he saw that painful blushing, and he muttered a deep oath to himself and shook his head.

"Why, sir, your Honor, 'tis not for the like of me—tho' God knows I try to be an honest man—to be acquainted with such a person as Miss Grace Harley! But then, sir, I have often seen her on the drives with her father. More than that, your Honor, she once came down on a visit into our mine; I saw her then. And I have a wonderful memory of faces. Again, your Honor, Miss Harley is a friend to the poor man, and her sweet face has shed a bright light

into more than one miner's lonely cabin on the Coal Hills!"

"God bless her for it!" came instantly and unrestrainedly from the lips of several of the rough men who stood in that closely-packed room.

Conspicuous among those who spoke was old Ben Walford, the miner.

The alderman bent his head and said nothing for several moments.

"Yes, yes," at length he spoke, in a low tone. "I have heard the same, and—Why, of course, you have seen the young lady. But, again: Whose carriage was it in which she sat?"

"Mr. Somerville's, sir; I know it well."

And he gave another quick glance toward the individual named.

"Did you recognize any other person on the road at that time?" asked the alderman.

"Yes, your Honor, Mr. Somerville. As I ran up to the buggy I saw him, to the rear, rising to his knees. Besides, I knew his voice."

"Did Mr. Somerville speak to any one?"

"I heard him endeavoring to pacify his horses. I also heard him in a brief altercation with the assailants, who stood by the carriage."

"And now, a question or so more. What were you doing on the Mount Washington road at that hour?"

And the alderman looked him straight in the face.

The prisoner started perceptibly, and hesitated.

A cold, anticipating leer came to the face of Fairleigh Somerville as he pushed himself still further from the ring of spectators pressing and crowding around the prisoner. He narrowly watched Tom Worth's face.

"You heard my question, prisoner?" asked the alderman, a little impatiently.

"Yes, yes, your Honor; I heard it."

"Well, answer, then: what led you to the Mount Washington road that particular night?"

The prisoner still hesitated.

"Speak!" said the alderman, authoritatively.

"I was there, sir, on—on business," was the halting answer.

"And that business—what was it?"

Again no response from the prisoner.

The alderman repeated the question.

"I cannot tell you, sir, now. I was on business; but, your Honor, I cannot speak of it now, for I am not wholly satisfied myself. I must know that I am right before my lips shall be opened."

As he spoke these incomprehensible words he glanced for the third time at Fairleigh Somerville, over whose face a livid pallor spread as he listened to Tom Worth's singular utterances. And he felt, too, the searching glitter that flashed from the miner's large blue eyes.

He drew lightly back, but with a front of assumed coldness, said, harshly:

"I beg that your Honor will insist that the prisoner shall tell his business on the road on Tuesday night."

"Again I say to you, Mr. Somerville, be silent; and be warned now, in time, to keep your suggestions to yourself."

With this pointed rebuke the alderman turned again toward Tom Worth and said:

"I understand you, then, to decline to answer that question, prisoner? Of course you can so decline, if you feel disposed."

"I decline to answer the question now, your Honor, though the day may come when I shall demand that I may reply to it," was the singular response.

"What mean you, prisoner?" asked the alderman.

A pin might have been heard to fall as all anxiously awaited the prisoner's answer. But Tom Worth's face was calm and imperturbable as he quietly replied:

"With all deference, your Honor, I decline to answer that question also."

The alderman looked chagrined, but he could say nothing in opposition. After a pause, he asked:

"Does your cabin lay in the direction of the Mount Washington road—I mean, toward the scene of the abduction?"

"No, sir," was the prompt answer.

A triumphant look shot from Fairleigh Somerville's eyes as he hearkened to the question and the answer.

"One more question, Tom Worth, and I will be done with you. Did you return to your cabin after the events on the road?"

The prisoner hesitated a moment, and then said, distinctly:

"I did not, sir."

"Then—and this question is suggested by the other—where did you go?"

Tom Worth faltered not a moment, but answered:

"I decline to respond, your Honor."

The alderman looked vexed, and from the saturnine countenances in the assembly it was evident that the miner's case was not so bright as it was a few moments before. Even old Ben endeavored to struggle nearer his friend; but failing in the effort, he said, in a loud whisper of admonition:

"Tell his Honor, my boy! Tell him, and don't be ashamed!"

But Tom Worth paid no heed to this injunction.

Again the alderman shook his finger—this time very threateningly—toward the old miner.

"I confess, prisoner," he said, "that your failure to reply to the two questions last asked you—the only two which could go toward clearing you, so far as your own testimony is concerned—weakens your case, and I am sorry for it. That will do."

As he spoke, a low murmur went up from the crowded room. But the tumult was quickly hushed, as the alderman, glancing over the written slip of paper lying before him, said:

"Is Benjamin Walford present?"

And he glanced around him.

"Me, me, your Honor? Yes, sir; here I am, and I am not ashamed of my name; but I can tell you I know nothing against that poor boy!"

And, as the way was made for him, the old man, hat in hand, his long, gray hair falling over his shoulders, came forward.

"That remains to be seen, my good man," said the alderman, quietly. "Do you swear or affirm?"

"I'll do what Tom did, your Honor," said the old man, innocently and trustingly, "for, sir, Tom isn't the man to do anything wrong; he's been tried, your Honor."

There was something noble, lofty, in the devotion and faith of the old miner—something truly grand in his firm, unbending friendship, and it told measurably on the crowd.

As for that "boy" of old Ben's—he, the athletic six-footer, of towering stature and brawny frame—he bowed his head slowly on his breast and wiped away the big tears that filled his eyes; and then, as the old miner kissed the Testament with an audible smack, he reared himself to his fullest height, and said, as if in an irrepressible moment:

"It will be all right, Ben! Trust to God, and it will be all right!"

"Yes!" thundered the old man, now almost wild with enthusiasm; "I know it, Tom! and so does every honest man!"

It took some time for the tumult to quiet down, for old Ben was now almost unmanageable.

At last, however, with the aid of several policemen, hastily summoned by the alderman, quiet was restored, and the old miner stood ready to answer what questions might be asked him.

CHAPTER XIV.

IN THE TOILS.

FOR a moment after she was so rudely thrust into that dark, gloomy apartment, on that terrible night, Grace Harley tottered and reeled to and fro. Her ankles had been bound together so long, and so tightly had the cords been drawn, that her limbs, suddenly freed, failed to support her. She staggered backward, and throwing her tied hands over her head, sunk slowly down.

But it seemed that she had reeled over to the side of the room where a sofa was placed; for she felt herself settling down on the soft, velvety seat.

As well as she could, she felt around her with her fastened hands, tied so cruelly together; but she durst not leave the friendly sofa.

She attempted to tear the bandage from her eyes and the gag from her mouth; but owing to the cramped, confined condition of her hands, and the security with which the gag and the bandage were applied, she could not succeed.

Gradually, as she half-reclined on the soft sofa, and the damp chilliness left her person under the influence of the warm, genial atmosphere which surrounded her, the girl's scattered reason and deadened faculties of mind slowly returned to her. And then the full horror of the whole terrible transaction flashed over her.

That she was in the hands of some one who exercised a great power she could not doubt—a power to order, and to have those orders obeyed—to command and to be hearkened to.

And that some one, she argued, must indeed be a bold person, who would dare do such a deed in the midst of a large city, and only an hour or so after daylight had fled from that city, full of life—of bustle—of law!

Then, rapidly, as she sat there in the terrible silence and gloom, she thought of the prompting motive of this high-handed outrage. Could it be for the sake of money?—of extorting a high reward, by adroit acting, from her father, whom everybody knew to be rich?

No—for whoever planned the outrage and carried it into successful execution had money to do it with. That could not be the occasion.

And then, slowly—softly—gradually—then, like the glittering lightning-flash, a dark, hideous thought leaped into the bosom of Grace Harley and filled her soul with horror. And then, as wild thoughts fled like racing phantoms through her bosom, the girl, with a gurgling

cry, staggered to her feet and tottered around the room—seeking escape, somewhere—anywhere.

But soon her head came in cruel contact with the hard wall, and she fell almost entirely senseless to the floor.

And there she lay, still and motionless, seeming scarcely to breathe—her frame quivering with convulsive shudders which swept wildly over her, but making no sound nor striving to rise.

For a long time she lay thus—certainly an hour—uttering no cry—no groan—stirring not hand or foot; but in her soul she was praying earnestly to God for strength and protection.

At length her breath seemed to go entirely away, so motionless she lay, when suddenly there sounded without the grinding crush of carriage-wheels. The vehicle seemed to roll up to the door and pause.

Then came the quick, heavy tread of a man walking, and then the half-unconscious girl heard a key grating in the lock, then felt a cold blast from without rush in. This was quickly shut out, and then a heavy tread, though it gave no sound on the thick carpet, shook the room.

A moment more, and a pale, uncertain glimmer, red and indistinct, fell on her sight, seen through the thick folds of the fillet over her eyes.

"Ah! we have you here at last, Grace Harley, and safely caged!" said a rough, harsh voice. "Well, you have a *handsome* cage, at all events, as you shall quickly see! Nay, struggle not at all—I will gladly assist you!"

And the person as he spoke—it was evidently the tone of a man—stepped forward, took her neither rudely nor gently by the arm, and conducted her to the sofa.

"Be seated, and fear not; there—so. Now you are comfortable, I hope. . . . Listen to me, Grace Harley," continued the man, after a pause, in a deep, discordant voice, not one tone of which the poor girl could recognize; "I have not much time to spend to-night here, for business beckons me hence. But, listen. I have followed and tracked you for many months—whether or not you know it, I care not. I have sworn—in *another's interest*—I would conquer you or—break your heart, Grace Harley! Nay, start not; I am not evil-disposed, nor do you know me. And, heed it, my girl, I have never broken an oath or violated a vow! You are in my power at last—after weeks and months of toil, but, in me, fear nothing. Now, a word of advice to you, fair miss. A friend of mine—one dearer to me than other living man, for he has served me many good turns—*loves you*—loves you honestly. He is not old or uncomely—and—all will be well if you say *yes* to his pleading. He has sworn to wed no other woman than you; be obstinate, and a living death awaits you; for, before you leave this house, you *shall* promise to be his wife! Nay; nay; start not. . . . Before I go, I will unbind your hands and eyes, and give you, likewise, liberty of speech. But, promise me by nodding your head, that after you are released you will not remove the bandage from your eyes until you hear the door close."

The girl, scarcely breathing, hesitated, and then quietly bowed her head in acquiescence.

"Good!" said the man. . . . "You will find everything in this room for your comfort, but you will find it, likewise, a perfect cage from which there is no escape. You are therefore at liberty to make every effort you can at escape, but I would counsel you to be quiet, for those who could bear and aid you are far from here. Be wise, and be patient! . . . Now your hands are unbound, and I'll bid you adieu for the night."

So saying, the man strode quickly to the door, opened it, and, going out, slammed it to.

In an instant Grace Harley tore the bandage from her eyes, the gag from her mouth, and, in a half-stupor, gazed at the dazzling splendor of the room in which she was imprisoned.

At that instant the door opened quickly again and the man, clutching the skirt of his coat—which had caught in the jamb—tore it nearly away.

One quick glance revealed to the poor girl a tall, slender figure enveloped in a long overcoat, a black, heavy beard covering the face, and a slouched hat dragged over the eyes.

In an instant, however, the man was gone.

CHAPTER XV.

UNDER LOCK AND KEY.

OLD BEN WALFORD stood ready to answer. The old man, though not confused, was rather nervous and out of place as he stood there. He cast a deprecating look at his friend, Tom Worth, who stood so near him, so firmly held in the clutches of the law; and the old man's look seemed to say:

"I am sorry, Tom, but old Ben cannot tell a lie, even to save his friend."

"I have only a question or so to ask you, my good man," said the alderman, encouragingly, "and will not keep you long. When did you see Tom Worth last *before* the night of the outrage on the Mount Washington road—that

is, when did you see him *last before* Tuesday night?"

Old Ben thought for a moment and then, looking up, said:

"Why, let me see, your Honor! Yes, I saw him at eleven o'clock, Tuesday *morning*, in the mine. I know this, for Mr. Hayhurst, our overseer, you know, had—"

"Yes, that is all right; you have answered the question. Did you see him again that day?"

"No, sir, your Honor; but then I know—"

"Enough. Does Tom Worth occupy the same dwelling with you?"

"Yes, sir; and a good cabin it is. Tom has been with me now ever since—"

"That will do; simply reply to my questions."

"True enough, and easy for you to say so, your Honor; but then, what I have to say won't do my boy there any good unless I can explain."

A smile spread over the alderman's face, but in that smile there was nothing like a sneer. He respected that old man's heroic devotion too much for that.

"Never fear, never fear!" he said, emphatically. "The prisoner shall have justice. Now, was Tom Worth at your cabin on Tuesday night at all?"

The old miner crushed his hat between his hands, cast down his head, as if in thought, and then said, as if each word cut him to the heart:

"No, your Honor, *he was not*. Tom! Tom! I must tell the truth!" exclaimed the old man, in tones of anguish, to his friend.

A noble look of gratitude came over the prisoner's face, as, without uttering a word, he bowed his head.

The alderman looked chagrined; he evidently sympathized with Tom Worth, and he knew how damaging the old man's unthinking, deprecating words would be.

"You will not aid your friend, my good man," he said, suggestively and sternly, "by giving way to such impulses. Simply answer my questions, and add nothing to your answers. Now, again: When did you see Tom Worth *after* Tuesday night?"

"Why, the next night, your Honor—Wednesday night, sir, about ten o'clock. Mr. Somerville had just gone, sir, when my boy came in."

"Mr. Somerville?"

"Yes, your Honor; he said he was in search of Tom, and that Tom had done this rascally business. I told him—"

"I dare say I am not 'suggesting' anything, your Honor," said Somerville, with a half-sneer, stepping forward hastily, "when I *hint*, sir, that *this* evidence has nothing to do with the case in hand."

The alderman frowned then colored slightly; but he answered, at once:

"You are right, Mr. Somerville, but this testimony *may* be available and judicious at a future time."

At these words, spoken with a most significant emphasis, Tom Worth himself looked up. As for Fairleigh Somerville, he turned first pale, then red, and bowing his head, as if he cared not to say anything further, drew back in the crowd.

The alderman turned again to old Ben.

"Then, my man," he said, "you are sure that the last time you saw the prisoner *before* the event on the mountain was at eleven A. M. of Tuesday, in the mine; that he did not return to his cabin at all that night, nor until the next night, Wednesday night, about ten o'clock?"

"Yes, sir, your Honor; you have given it just right, and much better than I did."

"Then stand aside; I have done with you."

"Thank you, your Honor."

And the old man drew to one side.

"FAIRLEIGH SOMERVILLE!" said the alderman, aloud, again consulting the slip before him.

A murmur, the nature of which could not be determined, ran through the crowd as the name of young Somerville was pronounced, but the faces of the hard-working men—who formed a large portion of the assembly—showed unmistakably the import of that murmur.

The young man was not popular; he saw it himself—perhaps already knew it; but he was quite self-composed, as, unbuttoning his overcoat, to show, it seemed, the handsome gold guard dependent from his vest button-hole, and the scintillating diamonds gleaming in his shirt-bosom, he stepped forward and stood, with haughty air, before the alderman.

The oath was administered at once, and then the alderman asked, very abruptly:

"What do *you* know of this affair, Mr. Somerville?"

The question was so sudden, so harsh, even, that young Somerville started perceptibly—so much so that all present noticed his perturbation of manner.

Tom Worth, standing erect, and, all at once, with a half-defiant port, gazed fixedly, searchingly at the confused witness.

"Why, sir," at length stammered Somerville, looking up with a front of assumed boldness and carelessness, "I do not know much of the

affair, and I fancied my evidence was in regard to what I know of the prisoner's connection with the offense."

"Very good, sir; as you will. Tell it in your own way," said the alderman, crustily.

"Well, sir, I was driving home rapidly on Tuesday night with Miss Harley, intending to take her to her father's residence in Alleghany City, when, on the bleakest and loneliest part of the road, leading around the brow of Mount Washington, I suddenly was assailed by two men who dashed out from the roadside. In the distance, crouched by the roadside, I saw another man."

He paused.

The prisoner started, and bent his gaze more fixedly than ever upon the witness.

"You saw another—well?"

"Yes, your Honor, and at that moment I was hurled, half-stunned, from my carriage. When I turned around the horses had started off, and then I saw this third man at their head, and forcing them back from the precipice. I *then* thought that this was a gallant act, but I cannot think so now."

He paused again for a moment; there was a deathlike silence.

"In a moment," resumed the witness, "the three men approached the carriage. Of course I was but a baby in their hands."

Tom Worth started violently, and his face grew black.

"I was thrown to the ground and bound securely, at the same time receiving a blow which rendered me senseless. When I opened my eyes in consciousness again I saw a one-horse open wagon standing by my own team, which had been securely hitched by the roadside. I could nowhere see Miss Harley, and one of the men had disappeared. But I did see *two* men mount hastily into the open wagon and drive off. And, your Honor," and he fixed his eyes steadily on Tom Worth's face, "I solemnly swear that one of those men—*he who drove*—had every appearance that this man, the prisoner, has."

"My God!" groaned Tom Worth, and his head went down on his breast. "Tis false, false! your Honor!"

"Yes, your Honor, false as false can be!" thundered old Ben, again forgetting all restraint, or, indeed, caring nothing for it.

"Silence, old man! Another offense like this, and I'll put you under arrest!" said the alderman, very sternly.

"That will do, Mr. Somerville," he continued, making a gesture for that young gentleman to stand aside.

Then a loud murmur came up from the crowd, and their changed looks showed that however much their sympathies had been with the prisoner, they were certainly different now.

Old Ben Walford seemed bewildered, but, whenever his gaze fell upon the face of his friend, the old man's cheeks and eyes would glow again with an unswerving friendship and devotion.

"EDWARD MARKLEY!" called out the alderman, consulting the paper before him.

There was a slight stir in the crowd, and a short, stout, matter-of-fact, honest-looking, red-faced man stepped promptly forward and stood before the alderman.

"That's my name, your Honor," he said, as he placed his right hand composedly upon the Testament held out to him.

The requisite oath was soon administered. Every one pressed forward to hear what this witness had to say, for all knew him, and he was everywhere *well* known.

"What is your occupation?" asked the alderman.

"I am a toll-keeper on the Smithfield street bridge, sir," was the reply, given as if the speaker was proud of his place.

"Which end of the bridge?"

"The Birmingham side, sir," replied the man.

"Did you see Tom Worth on Tuesday night, the night of the abduction of Miss Harley on Mount Washington?"

"I did, your Honor—twice."

Tom Worth started violently, and gazed hard at the witness, while the same black cloud mentioned before passed over his face.

But the toll-keeper was very calm, and evidently was speaking the truth; he flinched not at all before the lowering gaze of the prisoner.

"Twice?" asked the alderman.

"Twice, your Honor."

Tom Worth turned suddenly, and an answer seemed about to spring to his lips; but he controlled himself and retained a decorous silence.

"Tell me the occasion of your seeing him the first, and then the *second* time. But first state whether or not you know the prisoner—know him well enough to swear to his identity."

"Lord bless your Honor *Know* him! Yes, indeed! and to tell the truth, your Honor, I never knew a better man, until this business transpired!"

"That has nothing to do with the case. Do not volunteer or give any more opinions, unless asked."

"Beg pardon, your Honor," said the witness, deferentially.

"Go on, Mr. Markley, and relate when you first saw the prisoner that Tuesday night," said the alderman.

"Yes, your Honor. It was early in the evening—certainly not later than half-past seven o'clock. The prisoner there came across the bridge and passed in the light of the gas-lamp by my toll-office. I saw him distinctly."

"How was he dressed?" asked the alderman.

"In his mining suit, sir—his overcoat buttoned around him."

"Did you speak to him?"

"No, sir; I was engaged at the time, and Tom, coming from the city side, did not stop at all."

"Did you watch him?"

"No, your Honor; I had no occasion; besides, my own business was enough for me to attend to."

"Was the prisoner alone?"

"Yes, your Honor; I suppose so, though, at first, I thought he was in company with two other miners, who passed just ahead of him, coming likewise from the city side."

"Two others?"

"Yes, sir—miners, too. I told them by their dress."

"Did you know these two?"

"I think not, and their faces were turned down the river, your Honor; I could not see them."

The alderman pondered for a moment, and then asked:

"Well, the second time; when was it, and under what circumstances did you see the prisoner?"

"It was late in the evening, about half-past eight o'clock, I should judge. An open wagon drove rapidly down the Mount Washington road, and stopped at the bridge to pay toll. The wagon was an open country vehicle, drawn by one horse. In that wagon lay a dark-looking heap; what it was I don't know, but I do know that two men sat on the driving-board of the wagon, and that he who drove was TOM WORTH!"

With a half-cry, the prisoner turned toward him in a mute appeal. But that witness was an honest fellow; he prided himself especially on that one characteristic, and he would not fly from his position though a world were in arms against him.

As if in reply to the prisoner's look and appeal he said, firmly:

"Yes, Tom, it was you, and you know it, for I spoke to you, and asked you where you were going. You replied, very roughly, something about your name being in everybody's mouth, and then drove on. To tell you the truth, your Honor," said the man, rather familiarly, "this was so unlike Tom Worth, as I know him, that, though against my will, I took it for granted he was a little in liquor."

"That will do, Mr. Markley," said the alderman, slowly, after a long pause, during which an almost perfect silence was preserved in the crowded room.

And then ensued a low, continuous buzz throughout the apartment as the alderman, consulting several memorandums he had made during the progress of the testimony, seemed lost in thought.

Some five or ten minutes elapsed, and then, slowly straightening himself back in his chair, the alderman said, in a clear, distinct voice:

"I have heard all, prisoner, that thus far could be said in your favor, and all that up to this stage of proceedings could be said against you. I will not conceal that the case looks black against you; yet, I know well of your uniform good standing and reputation, and I have already received from your employers letters showing their implicit confidence in you."

"God bless them!" murmured the prisoner, deeply.

"Nevertheless," continued the alderman, "as the case stands, and on the testimony elicited against you, I must commit, or release you on bail."

"And how much, your Honor?" suddenly asked old Ben Walford, striding forward.

"Two thousand dollars," said the alderman, after a little reflection and deliberation.

"Oh, God! I haven't that much, your Honor!" exclaimed old Ben; "but—but, sir, I have one thousand! Take that, sir, and I'll go to jail in his place for the rest! Only don't send him, your Honor; he's too young—he's too—"

"Enough, enough, my good man," said the alderman, evidently moved, as was every one present, save Fairleigh Somerville; "I cannot accept such bail, though—"

"Then you can accept mine, sir!" exclaimed Mr. Hayhurst, the overseer of the Black Diamond Mine, in a clear voice, promptly stepping forward. "I am worth, sir, ten thousand dollars, good money; I'll go Tom Worth's bail, even for the whole amount!"

A half-cheer followed this declaration.

"It will do, sir; and I accept you as the prisoner's bail," said the alderman, as if he was truly glad bail had been found.

As he was about to draw the papers toward

him, Tom Worth, with a terrible burning in his eyes, exclaimed, suddenly:

"No! no! your Honor! I will not have it thus, though I am deeply grateful to my friends for their kindness, and you, your Honor, for your leniency. But, I'll go to jail, and I'll stand my trial; and, at some future day, I'll unmask villainy! I am determined!"

No arguments could persuade the prisoner to alter his determination, though old Ben, in his frenzy and bewilderment, came near chastising him.

And then Tom Worth was regularly committed and led to the van.

CHAPTER XVI.

MIDNIGHT WHISPERINGS.

NIGHT gloomed down over the place; the city lay quiet—sleeping beneath the heavy pall of darkness and its own constantly overhanging clouds of soot and smoke.

It had been an eventful day in this city of iron and coal—the day just passed; and in certain circles an excitement was created, seldom witnessed.

The main incidents of this singular case of abduction may still be remembered by many worthy denizens of the Smoky Town; and to the author's certain knowledge—for we have seen him recently—the estimable alderman before whom Tom Worth had his preliminary examination, is to-day living.

Of course such court cases, nevertheless, occur daily in all our great cities, but they are quickly decided, and are rapidly and speedily forgotten. The ripple on the surface of society they may create gradually, nay, oftenest, rapidly, trembles away toward the shores, and is lost amid the wavelets that fret and break upon the margin of the life-sea.

So it may be of the incidents in the tale we are weaving. We have chosen it from among several—have dignified it, and given it prominence and importance. Of course, attention will be drawn to it, and there may be some, or many, who will cavil at its truthfulness, and doubt the authenticity of the case as we have recorded it.

To such we will simply say, consult the criminal annals of the city for that particular twelve months—only ten years since—and you will find the case. Of course, we have changed it in some particulars, to suit our purpose; but you can find it, and the good-natured clerk of the court, for a small fee, will allow you to sit in his large, musty office on Grant's Hill and look over the record to your heart's content. We have simply "varnished" the tale, in accordance with the privilege of authorship, but we have not obscured its truth thereby.

Well, then, it was night over the city, and the worthy (and unworthy) denizens of the place were for the most part wrapped in slumber, some perhaps dreaming of gold, others of approaching happiness; others, perhaps, of the singular trial witnessed that day at Alderman March's office on Penn street, and the very strange conduct on the part of Tom Worth, "the poor miner," as he was generally spoken of.

That night, about eleven o'clock, a man stood at the corner of Bedford avenue and Fulton street; he had just reached the intersection of the two streets, and then stood there, looking around him in every direction, as if undecided which way to go, whether on up the avenue, or out into the street, and thence to the summit of Cliff Hill.

As he stood thus, hesitating and undecided, he suddenly heard footsteps behind him. The place was lonely and unfrequented at all times; now it was deserted and desolate. The man hastily thrust his hand in his bosom, and backed himself up against the embankment, as if to let the other pass.

The man who was coming up, evidently from the not very distant Boyd's Hill, had seen the other as he stood at the corner of the two streets; but he did not hesitate. He continued straight on, turned into Bedford avenue, and was hurrying down the steep descent, when he was suddenly hailed by the motionless one. He stopped short in his walk, and with a light laugh turned back.

"Ah, my fine fellow; I was sure it was you, and walked by to try you, to see if you would know your boss."

"I did not indeed know you, boss, until I saw that long coat; then I would have sworn 'twas you."

"Yes, the coat, ha! ha! But, my good fellow, how is it? Any suspicious characters around the nest?"

"No, boss; none."

"Glad to hear it!" exclaimed the other; "from what that infernal scoundrel, now in jail—may he rot there!—said, I feared that others perhaps might think as he did."

"I do not know what he said, boss, but I do know that that fellow followed two others from Boyd's Hill on Tuesday night—ha! ha!"

"Yes, he did; and, by heavens! that toll-keeper, Markley, saw him afterward with one of these same fellows! Good thing that evidence of Markley's; but I have seen several men, cer-

tainly one, who resembled that jail-bird considerably, eh?"

"You're right, boss; so have I! And, perhaps—"

"Yes, you, I know what you would say, and here, my fine fellow, is a purse containing gold. 'Tis yours; and now good-night!" These words were spoken in a significant tone.

"Good-night, boss," replied the other, and without a word more of this singular, incoherent conversation, which despite the loneliness of the place, had been carried on in a half-whisper, the men separated—the one styled "boss" continuing down Bedford avenue, toward the heart of the sleeping city; the other turning abruptly off from the same avenue, and was soon lost in the shades that hung over the tall Cliff Hill.

Tom Worth sat on a low stool one long hour after his incarceration, but he was suddenly aroused by the key grating and creaking in the lock, and then the cell-door was opened. One of the jailer's underlings appeared, lugging after him a huge bundle of bed-clothing.

"An old man brought this for you," he said, in a kind tone, "and we allowed him to leave it. Here is a note, also, which he sent; we have examined it, and you are allowed to receive it." So saying the man spread out the bundle of coverlets and comforters, and gave the miner the blurred and blotted note.

In a moment he was gone.

Tom Worth opened the note, and his big heart throbbed. His eyes filled with tears as he read the few rudely written lines:

"DEAR, DEAR BOY:—"

"I thought you might be cold to-night, my poor Tom, and so I have sent you your covering. I will also say, my dear boy, that I am awful lonesome without you, and that I have cried like a calf about you. Tom; and, Tom, I will pray to God for your safety. Your friend till death, "B. W."

The hours sped on, and still Tom Worth thought not of lying down. Eleven o'clock, and then twelve o'clock struck, and the prisoner arose.

Suddenly, far above him, at a little grate in the cell, looking into the jail-yard, he heard a cautious "hist!" He glanced up, but could see nothing. Then he heard a low voice, but he drank in every word:

"I followed you, Tom, and I know where they have put you. Speak, my boy! I have twenty stout fellows in hail, who'll tear these bars out for you! Speak the word, and say you're NOT guilty, Tom! Time flies!"

"No, no, Ben! Go home and pray for me, but no violence, if you love me," was the cautious reply.

"Then good-by, Tom," came in tremulous tones, after a moment's pause, from the speaker above. "I'll do as you say."

"Good-by, God bless you, Ben!"

All was silent again; no more whispers came, and Tom Worth was once more alone.

CHAPTER XVII.

A FRIEND THAT STICKS.

As warped and misdirected as were Mr. Harley's notions of right and wrong, in this particular instance, yet our readers must not forget that he was a father, with only one link to bind him to the memory of her who now slept the lasting sleep, beneath a costly mausoleum in Hilldale Cemetery.

He was a fond and doting parent; and the one short week which had elapsed since the sudden disappearance of his daughter, had wrought a marvelous change in the old man. His pomposity of manner had left him; the quick flashing of his imperious eye was now subdued and faint. His haughty stride was now an old man's tottering, feeble step; his every gesture a palpable sign of weakness, a lack of moral and physical nerve.

The ruddy flush of health had passed away from his round, pale cheek, leaving a hollow and a deathlike pallor there. Dr. Breeze, who more than once, in his own frank, cordial manner, had called to see how matters were, and if any tidings had been heard of the missing maiden, noted the altered appearance of his friend, and had covertly stolen his finger over the irregular, jerking pulse, throbbing so heavily under the hot surface of the feverish wrist. And then the old physician had hinted that he had better take care of himself.

The fact is, old Mr. Harley had been thinking a good deal—had been thinking of the unfinished sentence—the incomplete words of Tom Worth, the miner—of the noble, honest look of that poor man. And then gradually he had thought to himself that it was hard to believe Tom Worth guilty of the dark crime, though he had been quick to believe it. But Fairleigh Somerville had said so!

The old man, sitting late one night in his library, suddenly rose to his feet; a thought had come over him; if possible he would see Tom Worth in his cell!

Still no tidings of the girl; still the old man's rich reward was unclaimed!

We have mentioned that one week had elapsed since the arrest and commitment of

Tom Worth for the alleged abduction of Grace Harley.

The time had passed slowly with the unfortunate prisoner. He was a strong man, and one accustomed to daily, vigorous exercise. It may be imagined that an existence, confined to a narrow cell of twelve feet square, and hardly high enough in the ceiling to allow him to stand upright, was one of irksomeness to such a man as Tom Worth. The hours dragged themselves slowly away to him, and he prayed for the night to come, that he might find quiet and forgetfulness in slumber.

For two days no one was allowed to see him, save the turnkey, who, accompanied by an underling, appeared twice a day at the iron door, with the prisoner's meals. This turnkey was kindly disposed toward the unfortunate man whom he fed, for, on every fitting occasion he had a good word—one of cheer, to speak to him.

The fact is, there were many in Pittsburgh who did not entirely believe that Tom Worth was guilty of the crime imputed to him. They thought it strange that a man who had really committed an offense against the law, should peremptorily refuse to accept bail! To them it was a powerful argument that he had preferred to await his trial, at no risk to his friends, and had gone to jail, instead of taking his liberty, which had been almost forced upon him.

Among those who thus thought, though he kept his musings and opinions to himself, was the jailer. So he was very kind to the poor miner, and sought, by all means in his power, to show his sympathy, so as not to go beyond the bounds of propriety as a public officer.

But Tom Worth scarcely noticed this; he was so completely wrapt up in his own thoughts, in his own dreamings, that he paid but little heed to aught else.

Thanks to the kind remembrance of old Ben, he did not suffer in his prison home. He had a good bed, with an abundance of warm covering.

But old Ben had not been allowed to see his friend, though he had pleaded earnestly to that effect.

On the third day after his incarceration the prisoner requested the use of paper and ink. The jailer hesitated only for a moment.

"Certainly, Tom," he said, "you shall have them. But you know no letters can be sent out unless they are inspected first."

"Very good, sir. I simply wished to make certain notes in this case of mine. You know, sir, that I am to be tried, and—" his voice faltered—"I am a poor man, and can engage no lawyer. I must make an effort and defend myself."

For a moment the jailer looked at him.

"You shall have paper and ink," he at length said, in a low voice, "and, Tom, mention it to nobody else—why, though a poor man myself, and with children to feed, yet—why, you see that—well, Tom, in a word, I can let you have fifty dollars. Lawyer Cochrane is a whole-souled man, and he'll defend you for that," and the jailer, as he jingled the heavy keys in the lock, looked at the prisoner again.

"May God bless you and yours, my good friend!" said Tom Worth, as a tear stood in his eye. "I hope the day may yet come when I can tell you how much I am indebted to you. But I'll not take the money. Keep it, my good fellow, for your children, and may God bless you and them!"

On the next day—that is, the fourth day after his arrest—Tom Worth was startled to hear the bolts of his prison-door rattle in the lock. The door was opened. In another moment he was locked in the embrace of Ben Walford.

"I've come, Tom, come at last," said the old man, with emotion, "to tell you that I haven't forgot you, my poor boy, and to hug you to my old heart again. God bless you, Tom!"

The jailer turned his eyes away, as he saw the two strong men meet, and heard the words of true devotion which fell from the rough old man's lips.

"Heaven bless you, Ben!" was all that the prisoner could utter.

"I came only to say, Tom," continued the old man, "that I am true to you, my boy; to say keep up your spirits; to tell you, my boy, to try and come back soon, for the hours pass lonesomely in my cabin at night without you; and now! ah! how sorrowfully the wind moans over the mountain, to me, all alone! But, good-by, Tom; good-by, and may God bless you!"

Then the old miner was gone.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A NIGHT COMPACT AND A WIND-WAIF.

NIGHT once more had fallen upon Pittsburgh. The lamps were lit in the smoky streets, and the bell from the neighboring spire had struck nine o'clock. The thoroughfares and avenues wore a deserted look. There were but few persons yet stirring abroad, for the air was chilly and wet, and grates, furnaces and fire-places made it more pleasant to court the comforts of indoors. Despite the chilliness of the night, however, there were walkers abroad, and those

who, muffled up and thoroughly concealed, prowled about.

Such were two men.

They had just left the dingy *purlieus* of the Shinley Property in Alleghany City, and entered Cedar avenue. They continued their way rapidly on, and at last emerged from the nest of great iron houses huddled by the river-bank, near the Fort Wayne railroad bridge.

They here glanced around them for a moment, as they stood on the silent abutment. Then, with a half-uttered exclamation of satisfaction, they turned off simultaneously, and were soon within the gloomy recesses of the bridge.

Fifteen minutes elapsed before they emerged from the long bridge and plunged into the dark depths of the sleeping city, on the other side of the river.

They hurried rapidly on until they reached the straight double track of the Pennsylvania Railroad; turning abruptly down which they strode on for several hundred yards.

Suddenly they paused.

"Here we are, Launce," said one of the men, glancing up at the steep face of the cliff to his right.

The speaker was entirely enveloped in a long cloak, reaching almost to his feet.

"'Tis a rough climb, and we must do it, for it cuts off a long tramp. Come, let's go at it!"

The man turned off the track, and began to climb the high, precipitous hill. His companion followed obediently at his heels. The ascent was arduous, but they did not turn back—did not even pause. They had an object in view—at least one of them had, and they kept on faithfully.

A full half-hour elapsed before they stood panting, almost exhausted, on the crowning point of Cliff Hill.

"Come, Launce, let us go down Bedford avenue, and get out of the reach of this infernal wind," said the tall man in the long overcoat.

Without stopping to rest they hastened down Fulton street, and did not pause until they were sheltered in the banks that rose above Bedford avenue.

"Sit down, Launce, somewhere, anywhere, and let's have our final talk about that little matter—your departure."

The man called Launce did not reply at once; he seemed to be thinking.

"Yes, boss, yes. But, boss, it seems to me mighty hard to force a man away from his home, and—"

"Force you! Nonsense! It will only be for a time; and then, remember, Launce, suppose you were found out! How about the law in your case, *resemblance or no resemblance?*"

The man started.

"True, true, boss," he said, rather humbly. "But, sir, it is hard to say good-by to my poor wife and children! They, sir, do not know that I am a wicked man. I am always gentle and kind to them, boss, they are mine!"

"Again I say nonsense, Launce! You will be paid well—more than ever before. I will pay you to-night. And then, why, tell your wife that you are going on business to Altoona, or further east, to Huntingdon, or—"

"But, boss, I am not going on business, and I never told poor Mary a lie!"

"Then begin at once! Confound you for an obstinate ass, that you are!" exclaimed the other, in an angry tone. "Do you prefer that I should tell that little affair in the mine—have you put in jail where *perhaps* you belong? What would your 'poor Mary' think then?"

"No, no, boss! Don't talk of that! I'll do anything; but keep that from her! Yet, boss," he suddenly continued, in a firm voice, "could I not tell something on you, and—"

"Dare breathe one word, my fine fellow, and I would shoot you dead in the court-room! Do not tempt me too far. You and Teddy are in my power—do not forget it! Now, my terms are these: You shall not lose your position while you are absent. You can resume it when you return. You shall be absent one month; at the expiration of that time the trial will be over, and Edward Markley's testimony cannot be subverted. After that event come when you feel like it, but, mark me, return with a *smooth face*. In payment for this service I will give into your hands, this very night, at this very spot, the sum of two hundred dollars in gold. Besides that, Launce, it is as much for your interest as mine that you should be away from Pittsburgh—and you know why. That coincidence was a most fortunate thing for me! yes! I do not conceal it—for me!"

The other answered not for several moments; he had seated himself again by the roadside, on the rude stone, and his head was bent upon his breast. But at length, without looking up, he said:

"'Tis all right, boss, and I will obey; but, boss, you promised me a little *extra pay* for carrying victuals for a certain person to the old house, you know, sir. I would not tell you of it, sir, but every little thing counts for poor Mary and the children, you know."

"Exactly, Launce; your memory is good; I hadn't forgot my promise. You shall have five

dollars extra; that's enough. But are you particular to wear your mask, and answer to no questions?"

"Yes, sir, though this person has never spoken a word to me; and, boss, how do you get along there?" and the man peered straight at him whom he addressed.

The "boss" answered at once.

"Not well, confound the jade! she is as obstinate as can be. Besides, she has pulled a spike out of the wall, which supported a heavy picture frame, and, in a measure, she defies me! But she is failing. She cannot see daylight, thanks to my no-window-palace, and she is pining—wishes to die, and all that sort of foolish thing. When headstrong maidens get thus, under such circumstances, the end is not far off, and they'll be glad to own a man as a husband who thus triumphs over obstinacy and prejudice. I *must* have her and her gold!"

"I am half sorry for that girl, boss; she's a good woman, and is kind to us," said Launce.

"Dare show your sympathy for her by word or sign, and I tell you, Launce, your life would be cheap at nothing! Hark you well—and I am not given to trifling!"

"I'll not disobey you, boss, in anything. But now, when shall I go from these parts?"

"Day after to-morrow, by the eastern-bound morning train. Stop where you may, but nowhere under thirty miles from Pittsburgh. Let me know where that stopping-place may be as soon as you are there. Confound this wind! How rough it is!"

The wind had indeed risen, and was howling in gusts along the deep cut of the narrow street, and over the high hill on which they stood.

The man who last spoke—the "boss"—rose to his feet, buttoned his overcoat closer around his chin, and drew the heavy woolen scarf high up about his neck.

The other man arose also.

"We must say good-by, Launce. When you return you will know where to go—every Tuesday night, now, in the 'Shinley,' you know. Here, take the roll; it contains two hundred dollars in twenty-dollar gold pieces; and here," taking a bank-bill from his vest-pocket, "is a five-dollar note. Carry this vixen her food to-morrow, and on the following morning Teddy will relieve you. Good-by."

"Good-by, boss," replied the other, taking the money, "and thank you, too, sir."

The two men separated—Launce returning up Cliff Hill, which he descended to the track of the railroad; and then he was soon lost in the gloom toward the Union Depot.

The other started down Bedford avenue, turned abruptly to the left, and, winding his way along a deep gully, and across an open common, he finally entered Stephenson street, up which he strode at a rapid stride.

The hours grew on, and the black night came down, blacker every moment. The hoarse wind, now blowing a half-hurricane, tore shudderingly through the dark streets, banging unbolted shutters, and swinging creaking signs with its breath of storm and fury.

So rough indeed and wild was the driving gale that it shook the mysterious old house on Boyd's Hill to its foundations.

Half asleep, and yet far from being asleep in the true sense of the word, Grace Harley, within the one strange room of that old habitation, sat leaning on her elbow, as she heard the mad wind howling and roaring outside, and as she felt the uncertain tremor of the structure, as, exposed on the top of the bleak hill to the full fury of the hurricane, it shook and vibrated fearfully.

Then she sat upright. A low light was burning from the splendid chandelier—just enough to reveal the gorgeous, glaring paintings hanging on the walls—enough to show the costly carpet and the rare furniture of the apartment; enough, too, to light up the haggard cheek, the lack-luster eye, the failing form of the wretched girl.

"Good heavens!" she murmured, "what is that? Am I to die thus and here, all alone?"

The hideous thought that the house would be blown down rushed over her brain.

"What is that?" she again suddenly exclaimed, as a rustling, rattling sound, as if something was being driven down the chimney, fell upon her ear.

The girl cowered away upon the sofa in very dread. Then the cause of the singular noise was, all at once, explained.

A stray newspaper, tattered and bedraggled, caught by the wanton wind, had been literally forced down the chimney flue.

With a faint, sickly smile at her own needless terror, the girl drew near and picked up the paper. It was an old number, dated two days after the event on the Mount Washington road.

Grace Harley cast her eyes over it. Suddenly she started as her eyes fell on a particular paragraph—her eyes seeming to gloat over the printed words.

She hastily turned the light on, and sinking into a chair, commenced to scan that short paragraph. At that instant, however a heavy step sounded without, and the girl just had time, as a wild shudder swept over her frame, to

cram the newspaper into her bosom, and shrink back to the sofa she had left, as a key grated harshly in the lock.

CHAPTER XIX.

TOM WORTH'S TWO VISITORS.

On the afternoon of the day, the night succeeding which, with its startling events, has been given in the foregoing chapter, Tom Worth sat sad and lonesome in his cell.

The creeping wind on the outside forced itself through the narrow grating, high above him on a level with the ground, and chilled the damp apartment.

The prisoner sat with his back against his little bed, with a blanket thrown over his shoulders. As usual he had been writing; but the gloom of an early evening had settled down, obscuring the light, so that he could no longer discern the characters he was tracing. So, the prisoner had pushed the written sheets back on the little table, and was now seated, buried in thought.

What the miner was cogitating about, can only be inferred from the nature of his situation, the depressing circumstances surrounding him, and the grave charges against him—for the which, he was now confined to the limits of four damp walls. Tom Worth was a man who did not deal in soliloquy, but one who rather occupied his time in *thinking*—in linking this thought into that inference—deducing this conclusion from that premise, and making a brief, rapid summary from the whole.

On this particular evening, the man's face was dejected—more so than it had been since the day of his appearance before the alderman; for now, with the expression of deep thought that habitually marked his countenance, there was unmistakably commingled an air of dejection—of anxious, brooding care.

"Would to God I were certain before I make my move! Seeing is believing, beyond a doubt; and there is something to be unmasked!" He talked as if in a dream.

He said nothing more, but bent his head in thought again. An hour passed, when the door was opened, and the jailer appeared.

"I come to tell you, Tom," he said, kindly, "that I have brought your friend to see you again. I have searched him. By orders received to-day, visitors may be allowed to remain with you half an hour."

"Thank you, kindly, my good man," said Tom, rising to his feet.

In another moment old Ben Walford, almost too full to speak, entered the cell, and as the old man and the young met, in a strong, soul-yearning embrace, the jailer stole silently away.

Glorious privilege for the poor prisoner! glorious privilege, too, for the honest friend, the sterling man, old Ben Walford, the sooty miner!

For several moments the two remained locked in the warm embrace; and then seated themselves side by side.

"God help you, Ben, my dear friend! You, alone, are a friend to me now!"

"I am a friend to you, my dear boy, and there's no man in the mines that will dare gainsay it. But then, Tom, you have other good friends—and in the mines, too; and, hark you, my boy, in your ear: say the word yourself, and they'll show it!"

"I understand you, Ben," said the prisoner, after a pause; "but I cannot consent to it. It would be setting law at defiance; it would be an acknowledgment of guilt! I cannot consent."

"As you say, Tom!" replied the old man, at once; but then he added, half-defiantly: "though, if you would just hint such a thing, Tom, we would tear this old jail down, stone by stone, to get you out! Another thing, Tom: that broad-cloth rascal, Fairleigh Somerville, daresn't show his ugly face near the breaker of the Black Diamond! Even Mr. Hayhurst has promised him a mauling!"

"No violence, Ben, no violence, for, in the end, it would injure me. Be calm, be cool, be temperate, for I am to be tried."

"Yes, yes, Tom, but by the Eternal Pillars! you are innocent—innocent of this rascality, Tom, and we all know it!"

"Nay, nay, Ben, but it must be proved on the day of trial," said the prisoner, vehemently.

"And that lying toll-keeper, Markley," continued the old man, "came near getting a thrashing from our engineer."

"Do not blame Markley, either, Ben. I am convinced he was a friend of mine, and I believe he told the truth, to the best of his ability."

"What! Why, Tom! This is worse than not taking bail!" exclaimed the old man, with an irrepressible indignation. "You don't pretend to say that Edward Markley saw you that night, in the wagon?"

But Tom Worth did not choose to answer this question; he cast his eyes up, as if in a dream. And then, as if communing with himself, he said, slowly:

"'Tis strange! very strange, that—"

"Infernal! strange, I tell you, Tom, for you to talk so! I do hope you won't make old Ben Walford ashamed of you!"

Like lightning Tom Worth turned upon him.

"Trust me for that, my friend!" he exclaimed. "I will stand my trial, and, mark me, I shall be acquitted! And yet, to that end, God will have to assist me! But, Ben, your time is fast passing away. I wish to say a few words to you—words of importance."

He paused.

"I am listening, Tom, and will treasure up every word," and the old man drew nearer to his friend.

"Well, Ben," began the other, in a low voice, "there is a piece of rascality afoot in this city, with which it may be that I have become entangled."

He paused.

"What mean you, Tom?" asked the old man.

"Do you know Boyd's Hill?" asked the other, in the same low tone, without heeding old Ben's question.

"Every inch of it! Why?"

"Just back of the cliff, not far from the head of Stephenson street, there is an old house, which I—" his voice sunk so low, that old Ben had to lean over to listen; and then an animated, earnest conversation ensued between the friends.

When this consultation—we might term it—ended, old Ben sat for a moment, without speaking, and then rising to his feet, said in a deep, determined voice:

"Trust me, Tom; I will watch well. And—"

Just then, faintly and indistinctly, were heard heavy footsteps approaching—this time, as before, confused.

The footfalls paused before the cell of Tom Worth; the key grated in the lock; the bar rattled down, and the door was opened.

"Your time is up, sir," said the jailer to old Ben; "but, Tom," addressing the prisoner, "I have brought you more company."

For a moment the two miners stood, hand clasped in hand, and then old Ben, with a half-sigh, turned abruptly and left the room.

The jailer immediately closed and locked the door, and walked away.

The cell was now very gloomy, almost dark, and Tom Worth, as he turned to his new visitor, did not recognize him.

He was a tall, portly man, with a long silver-white beard, covering his face entirely. The man was clad in large, loosely-fitting garments—evidently, by their peculiar cut, of common material.

"Well, sir," said the miner, a little harshly, "what business have you with me? the hour is late."

"What business? That's good!" said the other, straightening himself up, with dignity.

As he heard the voice of the visitor, the miner started as if shot through the heart.

"Mr. Harley! you here?" he exclaimed.

"Yes, yes, my man, I am here; but, for God's sake, do not speak so loud! I do not wish my name known. Don't you see that I am in disguise?"

"Yes, truly, I do see it!" said the miner, slowly; "and again I ask, what business have you in my cell? I am a prisoner now, sir."

"Tom Worth, I have heard your voice before; 'tis strangely familiar."

"You have heard it, sir, in your library and in the alderman's office. But speak, sir."

"Well, then, Tom, guilty or not guilty of abducting my daughter—poor child!—I am sure you know something of her whereabouts."

"Upon what do you base such an opinion, sir?" asked the other, as a frown came over his face.

"Upon what you hinted at in my library. And now, I am here with gold—a large amount—to buy your secret; to—"

"Enough, old man!" suddenly cried the miner, his tall form dilating, and towering to a greater height than ever; "enough, or you'll craze me! You refused to hear my suspicions, they were nothing more; you mocked and insulted me when I was in the grasp of the law; you believed me guilty of this dastardly act, when, God knows, I would have died for your daughter; and now, sir, you sneak in here, under cover of night, and hidden in a disguise, afraid that you will taint your name! Come here to buy from me my secret! No, sir! I hold no secret from you or from any man, and in the court-room, when the day comes, I shall have justice! As for your gold—bah! I despise it, as I condemn and spit upon you for your own cringing conduct! You have my answer, and—I prefer to be alone!"

Five minutes afterward old Richard Harley, wretched, chopfallen and miserable, emerged from the rear door of the jail—slunk down into Grant street, and when just below the Cathedral, entered his carriage, there awaiting him, and was driven rapidly over the river.

CHAPTER XX.

DARK DEEDS.

GRACE HARLEY, with bated breath, sunk back on the sofa, as the door slowly opened. She gave a quick, covert glance thitherward, as the raw night wind crept in; and though, at such an hour, she could expect no other, yet she started convulsively as the loathsome villain who had ensnared her appeared. His bearded face, the wide, drooping slouch hat, drawn over the dark

brow, yet permitting the fiery eyes beneath to burn and flash out—the long coarse overcoat, concealing all shape to his person—all betokened the same unwelcome visitor—the same unprincipled scoundrel whose purpose was now fully apparent.

Grace Harley was a bold and determined girl, when driven to desperation; her danger now was that she had been driven almost beyond despair, and was likely to succumb from the very subsidence of despair.

As the man quickly entered, and closed the door behind him, he approached her. But in an instant she sprang to her feet, thrust her hand in her bosom, causing the newspaper nestled there to rattle—and drew forth a keen, flashing dagger.

"Stand back, villain!" she exclaimed, raising the blade high in the air, in her nervous grip: "I have cast aside the spike since I have found this better weapon—this, perhaps an evidence of other crimes of yours—and I'll die—Stand back, I say!" and her eyes gleamed with a look of determination.

The man recoiled violently, as he saw the bright, keen blade glitter in the full blaze of the chandelier, and, coward-like, his own hand sought the heavy butt of a pistol protruding from his overcoat pocket. Advancing a stride, he half drew the weapon from his pocket. The knife, however, awed him, and he paused.

"Villain that you are!" exclaimed the maiden, "draw your pistol and murder a defenseless woman! Death at any time is preferable to confinement here, and I doubt not you can play the rôle of murderer well; 'tis only a degree beyond what you already have done."

Half frenzied, the man drew the pistol from his pocket, but almost instantly let it drop again. As he did so, the girl caught a glimpse of his ungloved hand, and she saw a glittering jewel flash for an instant from that hand. Grace crouched against the wall; a shudder shook her form; a deathly pallor took possession of her already wan cheek.

But the man knew not the cause of this sudden change, nor did he care for it.

"You need not be alarmed, Grace Harley!" he said, in a harsh voice; "I do not come to annoy you to-night. I am here only for a few moments on business. Besides, my sweet one, I have other and more important work on my hands. But"—and he advanced toward her again—"you must be blindfolded. I wish to consult some papers here, and look into some matters which it were well you should not see. I must do it!" and he continued to advance.

"Stand back, sir!" exclaimed the girl. "I'll die before your polluted hands shall touch me!"

"Can you not believe me when I swear to you that I will not harm you? There, I cast my pistol from me!" and he tossed the weapon on the center-table behind him. "Now let me place the bandage over your eyes."

"Never! never! so help me God!" and the girl still opposed to him a bold, unflinching front.

The man's eyes glittered fire; his hands gripped together fiercely, and a furious oath of anger burst from his lips.

"Then, by Jove! I'll shoot you through the arm, and bind you by force, for you shall be blindfolded!"

As he spoke, he snatched the pistol, cocked it, and was about to aim.

For a moment the girl stood firm, unmoved; then, as a faint trembling came over her, she said, in a low, half-appealing voice:

"No! no! If you shoot me at all, let it be through the heart. I will apply the bandage to my eyes until you yourself are satisfied. Only give me your pistol that I may be safe against treachery."

The man hesitated.

"If you will swear solemnly by heaven and hell," at length he said, coarsely, "that you will not take an undue advantage—that you will again, at the proper time, place the pistol in my hand, and that you will not remove the bandage until I am gone, I will do as you say."

Thought after thought passed like lightning through the young girl's bosom. Were she to accede to those terms, she might place herself irretrievably in the power of the villain; if she refused to accede to those conditions, he might proceed to violence—the result of which she would not trust herself, even for a moment, to contemplate.

She saw, too, by the man's manner, that, beyond a doubt, he was in a hurry, and that he was, to a certain extent, telling the truth.

She concluded to accept his terms, as he had acquiesced in hers.

"It shall be as you say," she at length murmured, in a low tone; "and, right or wrong, I'll trust you this time."

The man seemed somewhat softened, for he replied in a more conciliatory tone:

"You shall not be deceived; but hurry, and—here is the pistol!"

As he spoke, he advanced, and placed the deadly firearm in her hands.

The girl slipped the weapon, with its cold steel barrel, into her warm, palpitating bosom, and then, without a moment's hesitation, unwound the thick shawl from her shoulders, and

folding it in several plaits, covered her eyes with it effectually. Then, drawing the pistol from her bosom, she sat down composedly upon the sofa.

"Tis all right," said the man. "Now turn your face to the north—that is, to your left hand. So!" he said, as the girl obeyed him, unhesitatingly.

For several moments there was a silence in the room. Naught but the roaring wind without, sounding ominous and preternaturally clear, could be heard.

The man turned toward the further side of the room, and, as if "to make assurance doubly sure," he drew a screen between him and the girl, who sat motionless on the sofa. But he allowed the gas to stream on as ever.

He drew near a low sideboard, opened it, and took therefrom a cut-glass decanter. He waited not for a tumbler or goblet, but placed the vessel to his mouth and drank deeply. Then he replaced the bottle, locked the sideboard and rose to his feet.

"Now—now!" he muttered to himself, "I am strong—and—look—nay, I must look at my King of Terrors, and prove to him that I am king—not he!"

He approached the wall as before, found the concealed spring, and pressed on it.

The section of the wall sunk obediently—slowly—slowly, and then the ghastly sight came into view.

A half-cry almost burst from the man as he gazed at the glistening skeleton lying there so quietly—so awfully! Then he sought and found the other spring, and aided the wall in regaining its position as before.

Without more ado, he turned, hurled the screen to one side, and walked up to the maiden.

"Give me the pistol, Grace Harley," he said, in a low, quavering voice; "then wait until you hear the door shut. Then you are at liberty to remove the bandage."

The girl obediently held the weapon out toward him. For a moment he gazed at her sitting so motionless, so trustingly, then turning abruptly, left the room.

Grace, hearing the heavy bolt of the lock slide into its socket, removed the bandage. But no unusual sight met her eye.

Ten minutes, fifteen, twenty, a half-hour passed, and Grace still sat where her strange visitor had left her. She glanced around the room to see if the man had left any trace, telling of what he had been doing.

But everything was in order; nothing was disturbed. The chairs were in their usual places, the sofa and center-table also. The pictures on the wall—Ha! the wall!

What was that ominous-looking crevice on the side opposite her? She had never noticed it before. It was a narrow seam, about half an inch in width, extending six feet across the wall, at right angles. Below and above this seam the rich velvet paper showed its cut edge. Singular!

The girl rose to her feet, and, with awe and trembling, drew near the mysterious crevice.

Grace paused as she neared the fissure, and glanced tremblingly around her. Summoning her courage, she suddenly drew a chair to the wall, mounted it, and peered into the narrow aperture. She could discover nothing, could determine nothing, save that there was a black, cavernous depth inside the place, and that there issued therefrom a foul, musty odor. The girl drew back; her limbs were tottering under her, but, resting a moment, her courage and determination returned.

She drew the dagger from her bosom, and placing it in the crevice, bore her weight, gently at first, upon it—then with more force.

The wall yielded slowly—slowly—the cavernous opening enlarged. The maiden paused, and peered in; still, nothing could be discerned.

The wind roared wildly without, and belated hoarsely down the tall chimney.

The girl pressed her hand on the wall, while, with the other, she still bore down with the dagger. Suddenly, from some impulse, the section shot rapidly up into its place—there was a creaking, as of chains and pulleys. The section closed with a sharp, clicking sound, and the dagger, broken in twain by the blow, fell to the floor.

With a wild cry of terror, the maiden reeled backward, slipped from the chair, and dropped like lead upon the rich carpet of the apartment.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE POWER OF GOLD.

LONG hours passed before Grace Harley recovered from the terrible shock she had experienced at beholding the startling secret in the wall. It was certainly some time after day next morning when she knew herself again; for she could hear the far-off rumbles of the city betokening the resumption of business. Now and then, too, she could see faint flashes of sunlight struggling through the door-cracks.

The truth is, that, so benumbing was the shock which the girl had sustained, she had passed from a state of temporary unconscious-

ness to a deep, unbroken quiet of a settled slumber. She had slept the long night through on the floor where she had fallen.

She awoke with a start, and gazed about her for a moment, ere she could recognize her position, for, since her detention in the old house, she always slept on the sofa, at the southernmost side of the apartment. Gradually she recalled the circumstances of the previous evening, and then, like lightning, she felt in her bosom. A smile of satisfaction flitted over her pallid face, as the concealed newspaper crumpled and rattled under her hand. She arose, and taking the paper from its hiding-place, drew her chair directly beneath the chandelier, the jets in which were still burning brightly.

Seating herself hastily, she spread out the paper, and hunted through it for the paragraph which, on the evening before, had arrested her attention.

The paper was the *Gazette*, and it was dated two days after the night of the adventure on the heights of Mount Washington.

The girl gave a quick start as the particular lines soon again caught her eye. Then in a low, hesitating voice she read aloud:

"THE ABDUCTION CASE.—In our issue of yesterday we referred to the high-handed outrage, perpetrated in our very midst—the abduction of Miss Harley, only child of Richard Harley, Esq., of Alleghany City. Since then, considerable light has been thrown upon the dark transaction. The evidence elicited before Alderman March, yesterday afternoon, seems to fix the guilt—or at least a goodly portion of it—on Tom Worth, the miner, employed in the famous Black Diamond Mine. On an investigation of the circumstances, this man does not prove to be the hero he was first thought to be. It appears that he was absent from his work and his cabin, without a satisfactory reason, for some time, both before and after the abduction, and the plain, straightforward evidence of Mr. Markley—a tollkeeper on the Smithfield street bridge—seems, beyond a doubt, to fasten the guilt upon the miner.

"This man, Tom Worth, strange to say, has borne a high character for honesty and sobriety, and was well vouched for by our friend, Mr. Hayhurst, the overseer of the mine, and pertinaciously so by an old man, named Ben Walford, a fellow-workman in the Black Diamond. The devotion of the old man to his guilty friend, the prisoner, was very touching; it was worthy of a nobler subject. Too much commendation, in regard to the solution of this affair, cannot be awarded to our gifted young townsman, Fairleigh Somerville, Esq.; it was owing to his efforts and untiring diligence that the arrest of the offender was effected. Another strange feature of the case is, that the prisoner, though offered bail, refused it peremptorily! Thus far he declines to admit that he was implicated in the matter, or that he knows anything of the whereabouts of the young lady. However, he is safely lodged in jail to await his trial, when it is to be hoped that, if found guilty of this cowardly crime, he will have meted out to him a punishment suited to his deserts.

"In the mean time the sympathies of the community are with the bereaved father, who is almost crushed beneath the heavy misfortune."

The paper fell from the girl's hands, and Grace Harley's head sunk on her bosom.

"God in heaven!" she murmured. "Can my terrible suspicions be correct? Can it be he—the deep-dyed villain! Poor, poor papa! and I know I cannot be far away from him; and yet, I know not. Tom Worth! and that noble form, so like—My God! a wild hope—nay, nay! and, if it were! Alas! alas! A bright hope—good heavens!—yea—yea—my watch—yes—I have it here—and—God be with me! I'll try! Ben Walford, his friend? Oh, he cannot be guilty, and yet, how can I communicate with him? God aid and help me! Do I see light ahead, and—'Sh! sh! here he comes—my jailer. He is kind to me; be brave, my heart!"

The girl crushed the newspaper back into her bosom, and retreated hastily to the sofa.

Steps sounded without; a key grated harshly in the lock; the door opened.

A tall, heavy man, his face muffled in a large woolen comforter, his hat drawn lightly over his eyes, entered. In one hand he carried a basket covered with a towel.

"Well, miss," he said, in a kind voice, "how are you, this morning? Hope you're well, ma'am?"

"Thank you, my good man; I am not well." They were the first words she had spoken to him, or he to her.

"Sorry, ma'am; and—I'm goin' to leave you, ma'am."

"To leave me, my good man? What do you mean?" And she looked at him, wonderingly.

"Why, ma'am, to-night will be the last time I'll bring your meals to you."

"Ah! then I am to be released?" she exclaimed, half rising to her feet, as a sudden gleam of hope flashed over her face, and sparkled in her eyes.

The man was softened by that appealing look, but he shook his head sadly.

"No, no, ma'am; some one else will take my place; and then the boss, you know, ma'am."

"Oh! God!" groaned the girl.

"I am very sorry for you, ma'am," said the man, feelingly; "for, ma'am, I have a wife and little ones, and, miss, I wasn't always a bad man!"

The girl looked hastily up at him.

"Tell me, my good man," she suddenly asked,

"why am I kept here? Tell me, for I have never harmed you!"

"What you are here for, ma'am?" exclaimed the man, starting back. "No, no, ma'am; I cannot tell you that!"

A moment of silence ensued, during which time the man busied himself in taking the girl's breakfast from the basket, and placing it upon the center-table.

Grace Harley glanced at him.

"I wish to speak with you, my man," she said, softly; "can you spare a moment?"

The man hesitated.

"Yes, ma'am," at length he said; "I suppose I can."

The girl arose and approached him.

"You say you have a wife and children; I know by your tone that they are dear to you. For their sake, I beg you to do me a small favor."

She paused. The man was listening attentively.

"Furnish me with paper, ink, and envelope, and then promise to drop a letter in the post-office for me," and she looked at him, pleadingly.

"No, no, ma'am! I cannot—I dare not! My life wouldn't be worth a thought! No, no, ma'am! I am willing to serve you, but I dare not do that!"

"You dare not? Then it is fear that hinders you?"

"You are right, ma'am," was the reply.

"Then you shall run no risk; I pledge you my sacred word, as a God-fearing woman, never to hint to any one that you aided me, in case I ever get home."

The man paused.

"Will the letter be to your father?" he asked.

"No," was the prompt reply, and she still gazed at him.

"Let me think, ma'am," said the man, walking slowly up and down the room. "I am going away to-morrow morning, anyway—and he can't suspect me!" These words were spoken as if communing with himself.

He paused before the maiden.

"I don't know, ma'am, but what I might serve you. God knows you are treated badly. I could not help it!" He spoke earnestly.

"Heaven help you, my good man!" said the girl, deeply; "say that you will aid me now—you will get your reward!"

She took him appealingly by the arm. The man still hesitated, but then, turning toward her, said:

"You must promise me, ma'am, before God, that even to your dearest friend you will not hint that I have done this for you. Then tell me who the letter is for, and come what may, I'll accommodate you!"

"God bless you and yours forever, my good man!" murmured the girl, as she sunk back on the sofa.

"Say nothing about that, ma'am, and I'll go out after the paper. But I must be careful."

So saying he drew his woolen scarf more close around his neck. In doing so, it became disengaged, and fell from his shoulder.

The girl caught a glimpse of his face. She started violently.

"Why, good heavens!" she exclaimed; "are you not Tom Worth, the miner?"

The man in his turn started, and hastily rearranged his scarf.

"Me, me, Tom Worth? Why, ma'am, Tom Worth is—but, I can't answer your questions—there! Now I'll go after the paper; I'll soon be back."

He opened the door softly, and putting his head forth, peeped around him. Then he cautiously slipped out and closed the door.

He was gone about half an hour, when Grace, who, in the mean time, had partaken sparingly of the breakfast before her, heard him coming back.

He soon afterward entered and closed the door.

"It's all right, ma'am," he said, as if pleased at his success; "I didn't have to go far. Here's the paper, ink, and all. Please be in a hurry, ma'am, for the boss might come, and then you know—"

"Yes, never fear, my good man," and the maiden seated herself at once by the table, and drew the writing materials toward her. Her hand trembled as she grasped the pen.

The man had seated himself at some distance and was engaged in repacking the things in the basket.

Grace wrote rapidly. It was a brief letter. She read it over twice and inclosed it in an envelope. Then she hastily scribbled a few lines on a slip, folded it around the envelope, which was already directed, crowded all into another envelope, and directed it.

"Tis ready," she said, in a tremulous voice. "For the sake of your dear wife and children, I beg you to put this, with your own hands, in the office."

"I'll do it, ma'am," was the prompt reply.

The man took the envelope, and without casting his eyes over the superscription, placed it carefully in the breast-pocket of his coat. He turned, picked up the basket, and was going, when Grace called to him:

"Here, my good man," and she took her

watch from her bosom, and then a few gold coins from her pocket; "take these; 'tis all I can give you now but you shall—"

"No, no, ma'am; I cannot," said the man, firmly, at the same time putting aside the costly present; "it would not be *honest*, ma'am."

"But I beg you to take them," insisted the girl; "take them; I do not value them."

"I cannot take the watch; it would be like stealing, ma'am," said the man; but he hesitated; "I am a poor man—an unfortunate one—and the money will be of service to poor Mary and the children. I'll take it, ma'am, if you are willing."

"I wish there was more of it—there," she said, eagerly forcing the coins into his hand. "But I shall not forget you. Good-by, and God be with you!"

"The same to you, ma'am, and from an honest heart!"

The man emphasized the last word; then he was gone.

A glow of happiness beamed over the maiden's face, and then she muttered:

"Can—oh! can it be done? Suppose I fail? Fail! I must not fail! And then, Ben Walford? Yes, yes, I'll trust him forever! I'll try the experiment *now*, at once!" she exclaimed.

She cautiously drew near the door, and listened intently for a moment. All was quiet.

She turned at once, and going to a closet in the room, took out a large sheet of tissue-paper, very thin and light. Then, after searching around for a moment, she found a can.

She hastily tore off a piece of the paper, rolled it between her hands, loosely, in the shape of a ball; then, from the can, she sprinkled on it a few drops of the liquid it contained. Lighting the paper-ball by a match, she cast it all ablaze up the chimney, and awaited breathlessly the result.

The flaming ball darted up, lightning-like, in the strong draught, and it did not return—not even the faintest cinder.

"Thank God!" muttered the girl, fervently; "it will do; Heaven has come to my aid!"

CHAPTER XXII.

THE FORCED OATH.

THE day passed rapidly away; there was sunshine in Grace Harley's heart, and happiness on her face. The roses were blooming again on her cheeks, and, as she walked with nervous steps the narrow limits of the room, there was an elasticity in her gait, telling unmistakably of a renewed spirit. She marked not the speeding hours, and was almost heedless of the utter seclusion which held her unwillingly aloof from the world.

Noon came and passed; the dusky twilight settled down, and the last rays of the sun had ceased to penetrate through the crevices of the door, or shimmer down the narrow flue of the chimney.

Night had come, and with it terror for Grace Harley. This was *his* night; she expected him; he had told her so, and this hideous man had never broken his word.

A shade of intense anxiety spread over the face of the helpless girl. Slowly she felt in her bosom, as a look of wild determination, in thrilling contrast with the late expression of happiness and joy, spread over her face. She started, as her hand sought in vain—started as if shot—her lips became pallid, and the blood flowed away from her cheeks. The dagger she had recently possessed herself of, *was not there*, and then, like lightning, the dark wall secret came back to her memory. On that very day she herself had cast the bladeless handle of the dagger in the rubbish of the closet. And the sharp spike—that was also gone! She was defenseless and alone!

Scarcely breathing, the maiden cast her eyes about her, but nothing presented itself. Slowly she realized her terrible position. Alone, in a far-distant house—with walls impenetrable almost to sound—herself entirely helpless, and in the power of a strong and desperate villain.

The light of hope died away entirely from her eyes, and despair reigned in her bosom, as she leaned back, fainting, on the sofa.

The minutes—the hours—flew by; the clock, on its rich, gilded pedestal of alabaster, above the mantel, pointed to ten o'clock.

The high wind of the preceding night had subsided, and everything was wondrous still and subdued on the desolate hill.

Suddenly the girl raised herself, for heavy footsteps, which she had so well learned to know, broke on the silence of the night. They approached the door; the key again grated in the lock, and then the tall form of the loathsome wretch appeared. He entered—this horrible man—closed the door unsteadily, but securely, and staggered across the room. The apartment was at once filled with the disgusting odor of a drunken man's breath.

The poor girl shrunk shudderingly away, and her fluttering, trembling heart scarcely beat in her bosom.

"Ha! ha! my pretty flower! I've waited long enough on your obstinacy! Decide to-night! I wait no longer!" cried the fellow, in a harsh, unsteady voice, as, balancing himself

by the table, he leered at her horribly, then lurched blindly toward her.

"Back, monster, back!" she screamed, springing to her feet and confronting him.

"Back? Ay, thus, Grace Harley!" and at one bound he threw himself violently upon her. "You shall give me the wedding promise to-night, or, by Heaven, I'll strangle you!"

"Oh, pity me! pity me! For God's sake—for your mother's sake!—for—"

"Shut up!" exclaimed the man, fiercely, at the same time covering her mouth with his hand.

The struggle was fearful between the frail girl and the strong drunken man.

Suddenly, by an effort, she broke from him.

As she did so, she tore away the roll of handkerchief which covered his neck, and with it came away, too, *en masse*, the long black beard which concealed his face. The maiden retreated rapidly to the sofa and sprang behind it for protection.

"God in Heaven! Is it YOU, then?" she exclaimed, scorn and indignation taking the place of fear; "and you would have me wed such a scoundrel as you?"

The man, half-sobered at this untoward circumstance, started confusedly back. But he recovered himself.

"Yes! Grace Harley, it is I; and, by heavens, you shall know it to your sorrow. You have discovered me, but, mark me well, you are in my power yet! Now I shall leave you, but *shall return*—return, to conquer or destroy!"

As he spoke he drew a pistol, cocked it, and advanced upon her.

"Back, base-hearted villain, or advance and stain your hands with a woman's blood!"

And the maiden's stature seemed to grow with her grand and swelling indignation.

"No, no, Grace Harley!" sneered the man, ominously; "I'll not stain my hands with your blood; you are *valuable* to me; you have piles of gold; you shall be my greatest conquest, and I cannot, *will not* let you slip away so readily! But, heed you, my fine girl, unless you swear to me a *TERRIBLE* oath—one you dare not break—I'll spatter your brain on that wall! That oath is, that you will not, if you ever leave this house, expose me by word, or sign, or hint!"

And his eyes glittered wildly.

The man was now thoroughly sobered, and his eyes glared with a desperate gleam of determination. With a sudden bound he cleared the sofa, clutched the girl with a grip of iron, and placed the cold muzzle of the pistol-barrel to her temple.

The maiden shuddered; death never was so near to her. She felt the creaking of the trigger as the man pressed it with unsteady finger. She had her life before her; she had a father; and she had the *memory of one dearer than a father!* She would live!

"I'll swear," she said, in a low, almost inaudible voice.

"'Tis very well!" said the man, in a hoarse voice, "and the penalty of this oath broken is the *instant death of your father!* Look to it that you keep that oath!"

As he spoke he hurled her aside, strode to the door, opened it and went out, closing it securely behind him.

"May the devil seize her and her gold, now!" he exclaimed, fiendishly. "Let her rot there! And I must see Teddy at once; and then—may the fiend curse me for my bad luck! I must leave for other parts!"

Saying this, and emphasizing the words with a horrid oath, he hurried away.

CHAPTER XXIII.

LETTERS FOR TOM WORTH.

Two days had passed since the terrible events recorded in the preceding chapter.

Tom Worth was striding moodily up and down the confined limits of his cell. There was more than usual gloom upon his brow.

The anxious, doubting shade we have before noticed had become more marked, and the prisoner's bold front of conscious innocence had changed. An unmistakable sign of foreboding now showed in every lineament of his face.

Edward Markley's testimony was a mountain in his way, and the miner knew that, unaided and alone, he could not set aside that testimony—that, whatever he might say in refutation, while having its due weight and entitled to its proper credence, would not be sufficient to negative the toll-keeper's plain, honest evidence.

Up and down the damp cell the miner strode. The close confinement, the bad air, the habitual dampness of the prison room, already had told on the iron man. His cheek was a trifle blanched, his eyes somewhat dimmed. An air of listlessness and languor showed, as of a man on the verge of coming illness, that he was succumbing.

Yet his was still a hardy frame, and the noble muscles under his jacket-sleeve told of a wondrous vital force there yet, and in abundance.

Suddenly he paused and peered up at the narrow, grated window above him.

For several moments the prisoner gazed fixed-

ly at that narrow aperture; then he slowly scanned the extent of the cold, damp wall lying between the floor and that small, heavily-grated window.

He shook his head; it was twelve feet at least from the window to the floor, and he had nothing on which to climb up thither, even were he so inclined.

It may be, indeed, that Tom Worth was thinking of making some desperate effort at escape. Yet that were strange, if true, when it is remembered that he positively refused bail—refused it too, because he was afraid, *so he said*, that if he accepted it, it would look as if he—in part at least—admitted his guilt.

Nevertheless, as the miner for a moment gazed at the window, through which scanty beams of the outer bustling world struggled, a half-hopeful, half-joyous light came into his eyes. Yet, too, as he measured the height of the cold, damp wall with his eye, the light died away.

With a sigh he turned to resume his promenade, but he paused again, as he heard the far-away rattle of the gate opening into the corridor, on which was situated his cell.

Steps were approaching; they paused at his cell; the door was opened and the jailer, putting in his head, said:

"A friend to see you, Tom, for half an hour."

And, half-pushing old Ben Walford inside, the turnkey closed the door, locked it, and hurried away.

For a moment old Ben stood still—now looking at his friend, anon bending his ear to catch the faraway faint footfalls of the jailer.

There was a half-mysterious, quizzical and triumphant look on the old man's face as he drew near his friend, clasped him in his arms, and said, in a low tone:

"God bless you, Tom! but I've fooled the jailer *this time!* He searched me; but, Tom, my boy, he didn't find anything! Ha! ha! Nevertheless, Tom, I've brought you something."

Without saying more, old Ben pulled off his overcoat and threw it on the bed; then he laid aside his thick woolen working-jacket, and then his vest followed. Tom Worth looked wonderingly on.

"What the deuce do you mean, Ben?" he asked, as a smile came to his face. "Have you smuggled me my pipe?"

Old Ben did not answer at first, but, creeping to the heavy iron door, he listened intently for a minute. There was no sound without—not even an echo.

"No, my boy, I did not bring your pipe; but—well, I'll show you in a moment."

He took out his pocket-knife, and, hastily ripping up the back lining of his vest, drew out, with an air of satisfaction from their secure hiding-place, two letters. He handed them at once to the prisoner.

"Both for you, Tom. One came yesterday morning—the foreign one, Tom—and the other was sent in an envelope directed to me at the Black Diamond. Inside that envelope was your letter and a few words on a strip of paper, telling me if I '*valued life*' to give you the letter '*with my own hands*,' and, by the eternal pillars! I've done it, my boy. And, my boy," he continued, casting his eyes up at the small streak of daylight glancing through the narrow window, "you had better read the letters while you have light; one of them, anyway, must be important."

The young man took the letters with a trembling hand, for the word "foreign" used by old Ben had sent a thrill through his frame and the warm blood to his face.

He took the letters in his hand, and then, fearfully, he turned his head away; he was *afraid* to look upon the envelopes. Old Ben stared at him wonderingly.

"What is it, Tom, my boy? Read the letters; they may contain news of importance."

"Yes, yes, Ben; I'll read them."

He turned suddenly and glanced over the envelopes. The effect was marvelous. The miner started violently back, gasped for breath, and sunk forward on the small bed.

"My God!" he muttered, in a deep, almost anguished tone.

"Read the letters, my boy; the daylight is going," said old Ben, in a low voice, creeping closer to his friend.

But it was fully five minutes before Tom Worth summoned up resolution and courage to tear open the envelope of one of the letters.

This was directed to him in a large, bold, distinct handwriting, and bore a foreign stamp and postmark.

The miner slowly drew out the folded sheet, and, spreading it out, commenced to read. As he did so, a note fell out.

We cannot attempt to describe the wondrous change and play of expression that came and went, like flashes of lightning, over the half-bronzed, half-pale face of the prisoner.

He read on.

It was a letter of moderate length, and was clearly written; yet several moments elapsed before Tom Worth, with a half-cry of exultation, folded the sheet again and replaced it with the note in the envelope.

"My God! my God! thy ways are inscrutable!"

For ten minutes he sat and gazed at the stone floor, seemingly oblivious of the presence of his friend. His thoughts were wandering far away, and a look as of holy triumph, either already accomplished or in his grasp, grew over his bearded face.

"Tom, my boy," suggested old Ben, "there's another letter; read it, for the daylight is almost gone."

The prisoner started, cast a look of gratitude at the old man, and said:

"Yes, Ben, my dear friend; I have not forgotten; and, Ben, bend your ear closer, and let me tell you—I *must be gone!*"

He said the last words in a deep whisper.

Old Ben gazed with amazement at his friend, over whom so wondrous a change had suddenly come. But he replied:

"Of course, my boy; and by the eternal pillars! say the word, and you shall go at *any time!* I know—"

"Enough, Ben; and now I'll read the other letter. Good heavens! I had not noticed it! *Her writing!* Wait, Ben, and expect news!"

He tore open the envelope, snatched the faintly-traced half-sheet from within, and at a glance had read it.

"Thank God! thank God!" he murmured; "and she—an angel in Heaven not purer—exonerates me! God stand by her and me! Now, at last, daylight appears, and—"

Rising, he strode several times up and down the room—old Ben, almost aghast with wonderment, watching him the while. Again, and this time almost defiantly, he cast his burning eyes up at the grated half-window so high above him.

"*My only chance!*" he muttered, "and it shall not fail me! I'll go! I'll right this wrong, right myself, and then I'll be gone!"

"Ben," he said, in a low voice, "the last letter concerns *you*. Nay, speak not. It concerns you only in this way—*work* in the cause of humanity is expected of you."

"And was I ever backward, Tom, when such work was needed?" and the old man trembled with the infectious excitement. "What is it? Speak, my boy, and count on me!" he continued, laying his large, brawny hand on his "boy's" shoulder, as if to add force to his words.

But Tom Worth did not reply at once; he was again glancing at the grated window above him and measuring the damp, oozy wall with his eye.

"Ben," at length he said, in the same low tone, tremulous with excitement—the excitement of hope, "Ben, are your muscles in good condition? Can you, as of old, bend a two-inch iron bar with a blow of your fist? Can you now lift a thousand pounds, dead-weight, with your shoulders?"

And he still kept his eyes on the grated window.

"Ay! *Try* me, my boy! I can do more—yes, by the eternal pillars! I can, even as child's play, tear out that iron grating up there!"

As he spoke these words significantly he bent his sinewy right arm until the gorgeously swelling muscles of that arm burst asunder the binding jacket-sleeve and glowed with a dull white luster in the gloom of the cell.

"'Tis all right! I believe you, Ben," said the young man, in the same low tone, with an air of satisfaction; "but, Ben, from that window to the floor is twelve feet."

"You are right, Tom, and a two-inch manila rope can be bought for ten cents, long enough to reach that distance and strong enough to bear an ox," was the significant reply.

"'Tis very good, Ben; you understand me well. Then, there is work for *both of us*. Listen well, Ben, for time flies, and your half-hour is almost gone. Listen, and let not your left ear hear what I say to the right!"

Then ensued a rapid, earnest conversation in an undertone during which old Ben never stirred muscle or uttered a word in denial or objection.

The jailer's steps were heard coming. Old Ben sprung to his feet.

"It shall be done, my boy! God is in it, and we cannot fail! The right-hand tower of the Cathedral will do, and, my boy, we'll work together."

"Time's up, sir!" called the jailer.

"Yes, sir, right away," replied the old miner, buttoning his coat. "Good-by, Tom. Pleasant dreams, and a good sleep! and, maybe, we'll see one another to-morrow."

With that he went out, and Tom Worth was again alone.

CHAPTER XXIV. THE RED LIGHTS.

THE shades of a dark, misty, disagreeable night had fallen upon the city. The lamps had long since been lit. The streets were being rapidly deserted, and the flaming shop-windows were going out into darkness one by one.

It was eleven o'clock.

Striding rapidly yet stealthily along by the Union Depot at this late hour, two tall men took

their way up an unfrequented street leading to the hill beyond.

They seemed to be anxious to avoid the flaming reflectors, for they drew their hats more closely over their eyes and their large coats more snugly up around their ears.

They were soon hid, however, in the friendly gloom of an alley, and at length entered Bedford avenue. Turning at once to the left, they began the ascent of that steep thoroughfare.

"Walk up, Teddy; come closer! I want to speak a few final words with you."

"Yes, boss, I am here," said the man, panting from exhaustion.

"I have seen a strange shape, Teddy, hanging around *my* cabin, of late," said the first speaker. "I saw it last night for the third time, and I am not mistaken. It was a heavy, stalwart man. He did not see me, yet it was evident he was watching round the house. Here let us stop; we are far enough," he said, suddenly; "I am blown, too."

They seated themselves on a large stone post thrown by the roadside.

"And I, too, boss, for we have come at a slashing stride. I am willing to rest, especially as you say there is still work before us to-night."

"Yes, Teddy, there *is* work! The house, I am sure, is suspected and watched—why, and by whom I do not know. The girl must be removed; you and I must do it, and do it *quietly*; and then, before the dawn of day, the furniture must be brought away. Have the carriage ready by half-past one o'clock. There will be no prowlers then. By a smart drive to the 'Shinley'—for it is there I shall take her—you see I can return soon and get the wagon. I'll help you, and one load will take all. The truth is, Teddy, we are in a scrape."

"We, boss? Why, I—"

"Yes, *we*, for you are implicated as much as I am—more so, too; and so it would seem in a court of justice!"

The other made no reply; he acquiesced quietly in the decision of his companion.

"I'll do my part, boss," at length he said; "but I hope you'll pay me to-night, sir, for you say you'll be gone for awhile."

"Do you not trust me, Teddy? However, 'tis nothing; it shall be as you say. Meet me on the hill at half-past one—that is, one hour and a half from this time. You can conceal the carriage in the hollow to the left of the street, you know; you have done so before. Meet me then, and I will pay you. And now be off, for you have no time to lose. I will hurry home and fix up a few things."

The men at once separated—one returning down the avenue, the other striking across the lower end of Cliff Hill toward the Alleghany River.

We will return for a brief season to the cell of Tom Worth.

When old Ben had gone, the prisoner arose, and, approaching the grating above him, drew the letters out from his bosom and perused them leisurely again. Then he glanced about him. He rapidly gathered together all the papers which he had written from time to time since he had been in prison. He tore them to fragments, bit by bit, and flung them under the mattress. Then he gathered up the few articles of wearing apparel he had with him, and put them on one by one.

Seating himself so as to front the grated window, he stretched his limbs out lazily, and, letting his head fall upon his breast, seemed to court slumber.

One of those singular letters we cannot now lay before the reader—we mean the letter bearing on its envelope a foreign stamp. But the other, the briefer one, ran thus:

"MY DEAR FRIEND, for such I know you to be:—I have learned all! I *know* you are innocent of the crime of which you were charged, as you were bold and fearless in saving me that terrible night from certain destruction! Merest chance has given me an opportunity to write to you. God in his mercy grant that the chance will prove availing! I know you have a staunch friend in Ben Walford; from what I have read of him, I *know* he can be trusted. I am kept as a prisoner in a house on a high hill and within the city limits. Where, I cannot exactly say. Tell your friend, the old miner, to go to some eminence and watch all around him to-morrow night—watch in every direction—and let the hour be half-past one o'clock. At that hour, if he keeps his eyes well about him, he will see some flaming balls of red light floating on the air *somewhere*. Let him mark well the spot and hasten hither, for I am *there*! The rest I leave to him. I can write no more. I long to be free, that *you* may be. God bless you, as my preserver!"

GRACE HARLEY."

The night grew on; the darkness became more intense.

Tom Worth still sat with his head bowed on his breast; his heavy, regular breathing showed that he was sleeping soundly.

Twelve o'clock rung out.

Suddenly, and before the vibrations from the neighboring clanging bells had ceased to thrill in the air, Tom started in his chair. A distant, faint, *ticking* sound caught his ear; it came from the grated window above.

The prisoner slowly arose and gave a faint whistle. It was answered immediately from above. Then the young man stood silently awaiting.

He could distinctly hear the heavy, labored breathing, as of a strong man doing work which taxed his strength to the utmost. With bated breath he waited.

Suddenly the loose rubbish and mortar from above rolled down into the cell and a cold gust of wind blew in.

The grated window was entirely removed!

A moment after a stout hempen cord was cast noiselessly down into the cell through the open window. The prisoner clutched it as a drowning man grasps a slender straw.

"Haul away, Ben!" he said, in a low, excited, but determined voice.

The rope at once tautened; then came the terrible strain, as the prisoner's full weight bore like lead on the creaking cord. But that cord was faithful.

Up—up—the window was reached. In an instant the prisoner felt his shoulders clutched in a giant's grasp; then he was slowly drawn through the aperture.

A moment more and he stood on the hard ground without, locked in a vise-like embrace against the brawny breast of Old Ben Walford.

But they lost no time. They turned at once, walked a few rods, sprung over the iron railing lightly, and stood in the street, now silent and deserted.

They crossed Fifth avenue, and when they had reached the somber shadow of the towering Cathedral they paused.

"Here's the place," said the old miner, in a low tone; "and, my boy, 'tis a giddy climb outside of the steeple on that light scaffolding. Thank God that is there! It's an awful risky business on such a night as this. Yet the top of that steeple is the only place that will serve us; it is high enough."

"Yes, Ben; and we *must* climb it, come what may!"

"Then come, Tom; we've no time, for I must get a carriage yet. 'Tis now not very far from one o'clock, and we must not hesitate."

The old man spoke in a low, excited, but decided voice.

Nothing further was said. The two men passed softly around the inclosure to the left of the Cathedral—that is, down Grand street, and leaping over the fence groped their way beneath the overhanging scaffolding which led up even to the summit of the giddy spire.

They reached the first scaffolding, and searching about found another ladder leading higher. The other staging was reached; another ladder found; and thus, on and on, upward and upward, the two friends climbed higher and higher.

The sharp steeple was growing more tapering and slender moment by moment; and now, as the men paused for breath, it seemed that they could girdle it in their arms.

Glancing upward—there in the uncertain gloom just above them towered the cross!

A sickening feeling crept over Tom Worth, and he dared not glance below. He cowered down on the narrow staging that swung and rocked under the wind which at this great altitude blew and sung so madly; and with closed eyes and almost suspended breath he clung on with a nervous grasp to the swaying boards, which alone held him from destruction.

Not a word was spoken for several minutes. At length old Ben said, in a low voice:

"A ticklish place this, Tom! Hold on tight! We can see the top of Mount Washington from here!"

"Can you see the top of Boyd's Hill?" asked the other, in a low breath, without opening his eyes.

He dared not trust himself as yet to look once, despite the gloom surrounding him.

"Easily, and the very top," was old Ben's reply.

"Then watch in *that* direction, for, unless I am wondrously mistaken, we will see that way what we seek."

Then ensued a long silence.

The time sped swiftly by, and still the old man watched. One o'clock had sounded, and Tom Worth had at last dared to look around him. He was painfully excited.

Slowly glide the minutes one by one, and then suddenly the half-hour stroke pealed loud and clear from a neighboring belfry.

The men strained their eyes around them, but—yes! almost before the echo of the clock-bell ceased to quiver on the dead, sleeping air, a red light, as of a ball of flame, small and quickly fleeting, flashed out in the night, far away, apparently on the distant horizon. Then another, and another, and another still! And then all was darkness.

"She has kept her word!" said Tom Worth, "and I was *NOT* mistaken! We must hurry, Ben, for Boyd's Hill is more than a step from here!"

So saying, Tom Worth slid along the plank to the end, swung himself around the upright scantling which held the scaffold, reached the friendly ladder, and commenced the descent. Old Ben followed close behind him.

Staging after staging was passed, and at last the two men stood at the bottom. In a minute more they were in the street, and, without pausing, hurried away.

CHAPTER XXV.

MEETINGS AND PARTINGS.

"Ha, boss! did you see those lights?"

"Yes, Teddy, and, by Jove! I am sure they come from my cabin! Come, come! Something is wrong there. Let us draw nearer and see what all this means."

And he started forward.

"We had better stay here, boss. They may be ghosts. This is the hour for them to be abroad."

The man spoke seriously and hung back.

"Ghosts! Come on, fool, and none of your nonsense. Tie the horses to the old post there and follow me. We have no time to lose, for there's work ahead of us between this and day."

The other man still hesitated, but only for a moment. He turned, and taking the horses by the bit forced them to back the carriage a few feet. He then tied the reins to a post, the sole remains of a fence that had once skirted this portion of the hill.

The men at once left the little hollow in which they stood and, entering the deserted Stephenson street, pushed on up toward Boyd's Hill.

Further down the same deserted thoroughfare, toward its foot, two other men strode along at a rapid pace. They were tall, brawny fellows, and they, too, bent their stride up the hill. They walked swiftly, as if they knew every inch of the ground well, and as if they, too, had work before them.

"We are near the spot, Ben, and I long to be there! If we are successful it will be a grand triumph for me; if we are wrong! if we fail! Yet, we cannot, must not fail! 'Twould craze me now, after everything has worked so well; but, Ben, it was bad you did not succeed in getting the carriage."

"Yes, my boy; but, maybe 'tis for the best. The liveryman, had his stable been open, would have wondered why I, old Ben, the miner, wanted a carriage. Take my word for it, Tom, 'tis ordered to be so, and, as I said, 'tis all for the best; I know it."

"Perhaps it is," replied the other, as if half-convinced. "But, Ben, should we succeed in rescuing the young lady, what will we do? 'Tis not a mere step from here to Stockton avenue, in Alleghany City. And, late or not, I wish to teach the old aristocrat there that an honest poor man can prove his innocence, and I'll do it!"

"You shall do it, Tom, for, if it can't be arranged otherwise, why, by the eternal pillars! we'll carry the young lady ourselves. In such work as that I can get along under a thousand-weight again; and she, poor girl, I dare say, is as light as a sparrow. Besides, Tom, you have an arm on you, and it is no child's, either! We can manage all this; but, did you think, Tom, that we haven't found the young lady yet? God grant we may!"

"Amen!" replied Tom Worth, in a deep, earnest voice.

They redoubled their exertions and strode on at a rapid stride up the hill.

Again several minutes passed in silence. Suddenly Tom Worth halted.

"Hist! hist! Ben! there is a carriage—see! just there in the hollow?"

"Yes, my boy, I see it, and we have company on the hill! We have work, too, Tom—that's a sure thing! And," he continued, in a very low, but determined voice, "rascality is the game! We'll see who gets the carriage!"

"Have you any weapon, Ben?" asked the other.

"None but my stout arms; they are enough. Woe be unto the man who braves me!"

"Then come, Ben—Ha! by heavens! you are right; the villains are at work! Voices, Ben—voices! and now for vengeance!"

And, as a long, wailing shriek, evidently from a female throat, sounded shrill and piercing on the still night-air, the two friends rushed forward toward the top of the hill. A moment only elapsed before they stood on the summit, and not over twenty yards from the old house.

Before them, indistinctly in the gloom, a struggle was going on. And then the coarse voice of an angry, excited man pealed out in a hideous oath—and a low, wailing cry for mercy went feebly up.

"Now, old friend, into them!" shouted Tom Worth, in a voice that was stentorian in its power.

Old Ben needed no encouragement. With the bound of a tiger he sprung forward by the side of his young companion, who was fairly flying onward. A moment, and like an avalanche they swept upon their assailants; in another, heavy thuds of falling fists, sickening and terrible, sounded on the air; then the fierce breathing and the half-muttered curses of struggling men; then a pistol-shot, and another, all told that a terrible contest was in progress.

But nothing could stand up against those two

iron-made men of the mines, with their muscles of steel.

The pistol-shots had been harmless, and one of the men, his face knocked into a shapeless mass, had gone down before the ponderous blows of old Ben's right arm.

For a moment there was a brief hand-to-hand struggle between Tom Worth and the other villain. It was indeed brief, for that young man was a very Hercules in the fight. In the twinkling of an eye he had sent his antagonist rushing and tumbling on the stony surface of the top of the hill.

The two strong men stooped simultaneously by the side of the fallen girl lying so motionless on the ground. Quickly they chafed her cold hands and temples and sought to raise her.

The girl did not seem to breathe.

"My God! my God! they have slain her! they have murdered my darling!"

Old Ben started as if shot as he heard these words burst in a wailing sob from the breast of Tom Worth.

"No, no, Tom!" he said, in a low, sympathizing tone, "she still breathes, and—Ah! there they go, the hounds, and they have escaped us!" he suddenly exclaimed, springing to his feet and pointing with his hand.

Sure enough, the villains who had for awhile been placed *hors de combat*, had slowly and unperceived regained their feet, and were now rapidly speeding away.

"Come, Tom," said Ben, at length breaking the silence, "all's well; the young woman breathes; ha! she awakes! Assist her, Tom, and make for the carriage in the hollow! I'll go on!"

And he hurried away.

Tom Worth, tenderly lifted that half-conscious form in his strong arms and bore it gently down the hill. He reached the carriage: it was standing in the road, and old Ben Walford, reins in hand, was already upon the driver's seat.

"Get in, Tom; get in with the lady, and let's be off. Those scoundrels may get reinforcements and return."

Tom Worth placed his precious charge inside the vehicle, entered himself and closed the door; then the carriage, under the guidance of the heroic old man on the box, rolled away at a fearful pace.

Down through the city, then over the creaking wire-bridge, then up Federal street, and then, at last, before the mansion of Richard Harley, the millionaire, on Stockton avenue, old Ben drew the reins.

Not a word had been spoken by those inside, though for a brief moment Tom Worth had held the little hand, so cold and limp, in his, and had pressed his lips ardently to it.

The household was aroused, and in a few moments old Mr. Harley, in dressing-gown, wondering and staring, stood at the door. His daughter reeled in and flung her arms around his neck; he uttered a wild, piercing cry.

"Your preserver, Grace! where is he?"

The girl pointed to the tall form of the young miner, who stood in the glare of the light.

"Tom Worth, the miner! My God!"

But then, in an instant, with a glance of unutterable affection toward the maiden, the miner was gone.

The clear sun of the next morning broke grand and luminous.

The beams of that sun flashed into the long-occupied room of Grace Harley, and into the chamber, too, of her old father.

And, not only was there sunshine in the apartments of that lordly mansion, but it glowed in every heart, too. For the lost was found—the daylight of the household once more gleamed in their midst, and happiness was upon all.

Of course the NEWS—as it was called by everybody—spread like wildfire; the heiress of old Richard Harley—the belle of Pittsburgh—had been found! Extras were issued from the different newspaper-offices, and the matter so strange and mysterious from the beginning to this the ending, though for a time almost forgotten, was again on every tongue.

Then came the equally startling news that Tom Worth, the prisoner, had broken jail and had escaped. Large rewards were immediately offered for his arrest, and his escape was proclaimed everywhere.

It seemed that the long-neglected grated window had been lifted or torn out bodily from its bed, and that the prisoner had thus escaped. Forthwith, that very day, each window along the jail-wall was removed, and the holes left were filled up with solid granite blocks, as can be seen to this day in the old prison.

But there came no news of Tom Worth, the miner. Many were the congratulations pouring in that day upon the rich man that his daughter had been found. And then enterprising reporters rung respectfully at the aristocratic mansion, and in their own urbane, *pushing* style craved a "half-minute's interview with Miss Harley."

The "interview" was, in every case, cheerfully or otherwise accorded; and to all she had the same news—that very brief and non-sensational, to wit: on the night of terror, on the Mount

Washington road, she was seized by two men, apparently miners, was thrown into a wagon, after being bound and blindfolded, was driven a long distance, and at last imprisoned in an old house, which she had but just learned, stood isolated and alone on Boyd's Hill; that the room in which she was kept was elegantly furnished. And then, with a shudder, she went on rapidly to state that she was released by two brawny men, apparently miners, too.

That was all she had to tell.

The dusky twilight was settling on the place that day when the bell sounded for the fiftieth time at the mansion of Mr. Harley. This time a letter was handed in by an old man who hurried away at once. The letter was directed in a clear, bold handwriting to Miss Grace Harley.

Mr. Harley had strolled forth to the commons to get exercise and relaxation, of both of which he stood in need. Grace was all alone. She started violently as she saw the superscription of the envelope; but tearing open the letter she read it through to the end. When she had finished, she laid the missive by, and sinking softly on the sofa again, she covered her face with her hands and wept silent tears of sorrow and joy commingled, murmuring at the same time:

"Darling! darling! It was he! My heart said so; and now—now—without a word, he has gone! God grant that we may meet again!"

That letter, lying there crushed and crumpled on the sofa, read as follows:

"MY DARLING ONE:—I have but a few moments to write, and these I occupy, darling, in telling you that you are still the cherished idol of my heart—that you and your memory are dearer to me than life itself! I was wrongfully accused, Grace; yet, for fear of erring, I dared not exonerate myself by charging the crime on others *then*. Heaven has aided me in rescuing you from the clutches of a villain. Let both of us thank that God who has so blessed and befriended us. And now, darling Grace, a word more: I have just received a letter from a foreign land, summoning me away; I must go. This is not the time for explanations. But, before I go, let me pledge to you again an undying love and fidelity. I'll not forget you, Grace; and I'll win and wed you yet, though the whole world were opposed to me. Be true to me, as I will be to you; wait for my coming, and—shun that man whom I know to be a deep-dyed villain—FAIRLEIGH SOMERVILLE. Be kind, Grace, to my friend, poor old Ben Walford, who is almost crazed at my departure. He is one of nature's noblest of noble-men, and I love him beyond the expression of words. And now, Grace, farewell, but not *forever*! You know me; so the name below will do.

Forever yours,

TOM WORTH."

Late that night a small row-boat shot off stealthily from the levee near the Smithfield street bridge, and took its way rapidly down the current of the Monongahela toward the dusky-flowing Ohio.

In the boat sat Tom Worth and old Ben, and both men pulled the easy-working, noiseless oars. On they sped, miles and miles below the dark city. Then, at last, they turned the head of the boat, and, by a few vigorous strokes, shot the light craft in toward the bank.

The men leaped ashore.

"The time has come, Ben; 'tis best that this parting be soon over; we'll suffer less. Good-by, my dear old friend, and may God always bless you! I am safe now, and the yelping hounds of the law cannot find me. Pray to God, Ben, that we may meet again. And now, once more, good-by!"

The old miner could not speak; he dared not trust his trembling voice, coming up, as it did, from a heart almost breaking. He strained his "boy" to his breast for a minute, as if loth to let him go; and then the old man staggered back into the boat.

When Ben Walford looked again, Tom had disappeared in the gloom of the black forest trees, which fringed the darkly-flowing river.

CHAPTER XXVI.

OLD THINGS, AND A NEW ARRIVAL.

A LONG time has elapsed since the occurrence of the events as given in the last chapter. To tie the broken thread securely, to make our chain of circumstances strong again, it is necessary to go back awhile—some two years and more—to the time of the escape of Tom Worth.

Soon after the disappearance of the miner, the report came that he had been drowned in attempting to get away by the river. Of course this rumor, in due time, reached the ears of Grace Harley. When it did, a terrible convulsion passed over her frame, and, hiding her face in her hands, she gave way silently to a flood of tears. Her father had seen this emotion, and then, as a sudden gleam of intelligence passed over his face, he had taken his daughter's hand tremblingly and tenderly in his, and had spoken sympathizing words in her ear.

After that, when Grace appeared in public, strange to say—and everybody wondered—she wore black.

In the mean time a cloud, at first very small, yet momentarily increasing, was settling over old Richard Harley.

After the escape from jail and disappearance of Tom Worth, for some time nothing was seen of Fairleigh Somerville, Esq. It is true, he

was in the city, but, he did not show himself at the Harley mansion. As the weeks rolled on, however, the young millionaire finally made his appearance, once again, at the aristocratic dwelling on Stockton avenue. He drove over, as usual, in his trotting-wagon, and, hesitating not a moment, walked up the graveled way, and rung the bell. He had been readily admitted by the liveried servant.

And Fairleigh Somerville smiled grimly—satanically—to himself, as once again he stood in the elegant mansion, and as he glanced at the rich, showy livery of the domestic. It was a wicked fire which flashed from his eyes, as he looked a second time at the pompous servant. But, he handed in his perfumed card, and at a sign from the servant entered the parlor.

Fairleigh Somerville was bent on business—deep and important business—though perhaps the observer would have noted nothing from the quiet, smooth, smiling exterior. When his card was handed in that day, a strange, proud smile flitted over the half-sad face of Mr. Harley, and a bright, triumphant fire gleamed in his eye. Poor old man. Despite the lesson he had been recently taught—despite the gloom which of late had overshadowed him and his, he was still ambitious. And, as he gazed at the sharp graven characters, on the bit of cardboard, a wild hope again found place in the father's heart.

He had a marriageable daughter, and Fairleigh Somerville was a very rich young man!

As the visitor, however, was standing by the piano in the parlor, waiting the coming of his host, the door suddenly opened. Somerville turned. He started violently, and his face first paled then reddened as his gaze fell upon Grace Harley. The maiden, too, shook fearfully, and she was about hastening from the room when the man strode fiercely up to her, and bending down, whispered a few words in her ear.

The girl cowered, and without reply soever, turned and tottered from the parlor.

Fairleigh Somerville knew that between him and Grace Harley there was a chasm which could not be bridged—he knew that, in the maiden's heart, she loathed and scorned him; he knew that he could never call her his wife!

The meeting between the old gentleman and his visitor that day was cordial, and the conversation between them, whatever the subject, was long and earnest. It seemed, too, to be confidential, for Mr. Harley drew the curtains, lit the gas, and locked the doors of the parlor.

When the time came for Somerville to leave, and it was late in the evening, he stood for a moment in the parlor by the table, and slowly folded up numerous papers which had been spread out before the gentlemen. Then, as he hesitated, he remarked:

"I am sure of the success of the enterprise, my dear sir, and excuse me, sir, but if you wish, why, I will advance for you. When the entire investment is made up, why, sir, you can then repay me all at once," and he looked the other earnestly in the face.

Mr. Harley hesitated, and a slight shade passed over his brow. He thought for a moment.

The truth is, pecuniary matters had not gone well of late with the old man. He had accumulated a large fortune, but he knew not how to take care of it. His income had been steadily on the decline for some time, and his business affairs were in a condition he disliked to contemplate. He had indorsed for impecunious friends, and, as the reward for his generosity, he was compelled to pay out in several instances very large amounts. The time had passed when Richard Harley could draw a check at random, and be careless of the sum; yet he was a rich man still.

Hence the old man had hesitated at the young man's remark. It was only for a moment, however, for then he looked up and said, frankly:

"You are very kind, sir, and your proffer is gratefully accepted. Keep an account, sir, and we will settle when everything is arranged. I, too, am sanguine of the success of the venture."

When Fairleigh Somerville drove across the Suspension Bridge that night, the flaring lamp flashing in his face revealed a hideous smile of triumph; but with that expression there was one darker still—*revenge!*

And again and again he came; and every time he offered, very cleverly, to advance money in a certain enterprise.

On these visits Somerville never saw Grace Harley, and he never asked for her; he seemed to have forgotten her. The old father thought strangely of this, but he never mentioned it.

But, Grace knew of these visits, and she was sick and sad at heart at their frequency. A heavy weight seemed to be dragging her down.

Still, Somerville came and time was speeding away.

At last, one night, on the occasion of a visit from the young millionaire, the library rung with loud, angry words, though no one on the outside heard those words. Somerville was at last ready for the consummation of his plans—he was pressing the old man for a settlement. Whether or not the speculation had proved a success or an abortion is not known. But, at

all events, Fairleigh Somerville held a paper—a legal instrument—against the poor old man who had so blindly trusted him.

That paper was a lien upon the splendid Harley mansion entire; and, when the gentlemen separated that night, it was with pitiable appeals from the old man, and dark threats, and vengeful, triumphant exultations from his "partner."

Indeed, the cloud was upon Richard Harley, and it gloomed his sky from horizon to zenith.

Thus matters stood at the time we resume our story, when, one afternoon, there descended, unaccompanied by any one, from the late Philadelphia train, at the Union Depot, a tall, aristocratic-looking gentleman.

What was singular about this richly-clad stranger, and what made him most curiously observed by all, was, while his hair and eyebrows were of the richest auburn, his mustache and whiskers, long and curling, were as white as snow.

Yet, for all that, the gentleman was a young-looking man, and very handsome besides. And no one had ever seen him before.

CHAPTER XXVII. OLD LANDMARKS.

WHEN the new-comer had alighted from the car, he passed quickly through the extensive depot, and, reaching the street, paused a moment and gazed about him. Noticing that several persons were eying him closely, he turned away at once to the Monongahela House omnibus, which was in waiting. Depositing several baggage-checks in the hands of the driver, he wrapped his cloak around him, and shrank away in his seat as if disliking observation.

There were a large number of passengers by this train, and the omnibus was kept waiting for a considerable length of time.

Opposite the stranger, two gentlemen—apparently citizens of the place, and who had evidently gotten in to ride down-town—had just entered and seated themselves. A remark from one of them made the new-comer start, and hastily turn his head. But he instantly checked himself without creating observation, and nestled back still further in his seat. His ears were open, however.

"Yes, you are right," said one of the gentlemen; "it's a strange piece of work."

"Fairleigh Somerville is a wide-awake man," answered he who had first spoken. "He has made his way up rapidly. But I would have never dreamed he held claims against poor old Harley to such an amount."

"Nor I; and is it really true that he has taken possession of the fine mansion this very day?"

"Yes. I was by there this morning. Somerville is a man of the world, and I fear has but little heart. He turned the old man and his daughter out into the street! I saw the girl leading her poor old father off."

"Sorry, indeed; but Mr. Harley was very unwise in his speculations. Where are they now?"

"I don't know exactly, but I think they are in one of his old tenement-houses on the Common."

"Well, strange things often happen!" said the other, after a pause. "Four years ago Richard Harley was reputed one of the wealthiest men in Alleghany City; now, he is worse than bankrupt, if report be true; he is in absolute want!"

"Yes; and the strangest part of the affair is, that the man who has legally, of course, ousted him from the mansion, was, two years ago, a suitor for the hand of poor Grace, and I much fear that, in return for her evident dislike of him, he has wreaked a revenge by involving the old man."

Just then the omnibus, having received its load, rattled off, and the conversation ceased.

The stranger had sat like a statue; he had heard every word.

The hotel was soon reached.

The name written by this conspicuous-looking person on the books at the Monongahela House, and which may still be seen by the curious, was:

"FELIX MORTON."

But the name stood alone; it was not followed by residence. At tea, Mr. Morton descended from his room, partook lightly and hastily of the meal, and, arising from the table, put on his overcoat, and left the hotel. He seemed a little nervous, but no one noticed it.

On leaving the hotel, the gentleman walked down Water street to Wood. He pursued his way along this thoroughfare until he reached Fifth avenue. Turning abruptly down this, and as if thoroughly familiar with the city, he hurried on toward the river. Crossing the Alleghany on the Suspension Bridge, he walked straight on up Federal street, to Stockton avenue. There he paused.

The lamps were now lit, for night had settled down. Feeling in his pocket, the white-bearded, stalwart stranger drew out a letter or a memorandum-slip.

"Tis all right!" he muttered. "I must see if this fearful tale be true! I must go on, for Tom's sake!"

Turning into Stockton avenue, he started forward again. Finally he reached the Harley mansion. He halted at the iron gate; then, suddenly entering, he approached the great hall door to read by the glaring street-lamp, on a new, glittering door-plate, the name:

"FAIRLEIGH SOMERVILLE."

The stranger turned as if to retreat, while a deathly pallor spread over his face.

"My God! so soon!" he muttered. "Then 'tis true! Alas! alas! and yet—"

He paused, and as if impelled by frenzy, faced about again and pulled the bell with a steady hand.

In a moment the door was opened, and a pompous servant in livery stood there.

"Does Mr. Richard Harley live here?"

"Richard Harley! No, indeed," said the domestic, somewhat superciliously; "though he slept here no longer ago than last night!" and the man smiled scornfully.

"Ah! And where, then, does the old gentleman live?" asked the stranger.

"Can't exactly say; we know very little about them; but the old man lives somewhere on Cedar avenue, I think—t'other side of the Common."

"Ah! Yes, and—" he slipped some coins as he spoke into the man's hand, "and is his daughter, Miss Grace Harley, still with her father?"

"Yes, sir; she has nowhere else to go. But, sir," and the man, who had readily unbent his dignity, sunk his voice familiarly, "people do say that the girl is crazy—stark mad, and has been for many a day, all about a venturesome rascal by the name of Tom Worth, a miner that was, who stole her away once, and who, having broke jail, was drowned trying to get away."

"Ah! you surprise me. And—"

But, just then, the tall, slender form of Somerville entered the brilliantly-lit hallway from the supper-room. His face as it showed in the bright light was flushed with a triumphant glow—may-be with wine.

The stranger drew back in the shade, and saying, curtly, "Thank you, my man," turned upon his heel and entered the street again.

An hour from that time, a low but decided rap sounded on the door of old Ben Walford's cabin, over on the cliff. The summons was promptly answered by the old man. When he had opened the door, the tall, aristocratic stranger entered.

Old Ben gazed earnestly and wonderingly at him.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

NEWS FOR OLD BEN.

"DOES Ben Walford live here?" asked the stranger, in a deep voice.

Old Ben still gazed at him.

The lapse of two years had not made much change in the appearance of the old man. The same long iron-gray hair fell over his jacket-collar; the same good-natured, independent look sat on his age-seamed face; the same herculean muscles swelled on his arms as he drew and extended those members in stroking his chin. He was the same honest old Ben, the miner; but a shade of more than usual sadness clouded his face.

He bowed respectfully to the imposing-looking stranger, and said:

"Yes, sir, old Ben Walford lives here, and he is not ashamed of his name—why, I am the man."

A smile spread over the face of the gentleman as he looked full into the honest countenance of the other. Then he suddenly strode forward, and, much to the old man's astonishment, caught his hard, horny hand in his own soft but firm grip.

"Then, my dear sir," he exclaimed, "I am glad to see you. I feel like I have known you for years."

"Me, sir? Asking your pardon, sir, I am only a miner—a poor man—but, thus far, an honest one. And, sir, never to my knowledge have I seen your face before."

But the old miner took the proffered hand honestly and cordially.

"That may be, my good sir," replied the stranger, smiling; "but I have heard your name so often on the lips of one well known—in fact, very dear—to me, and from him, so much that was good and noble of you, that I feel like I know you. My name is Morton, Felix Morton, and, sir, I—"

"Glad to see you, Mr. Morton; and, though wondering, of course, yet, sir, who was it that spoke so well of old Ben?" and the old man gazed his visitor keenly in the face.

The stranger hesitated, and cast his eyes down ere he spoke. A slight tremor passed over his frame; but, when he raised his head again, his eyes were bright and his voice steady as he said:

"Why, you knew him well; his name—Tom Worth, and—"

"TOM WORTH! You bring me news, sir?" and old Ben started as if stricken with a rifle-ball. "And, sir, what of Tom Worth? What tidings of 'my boy,' as I always called him? God bless him!"

The old miner dashed a quick, unbidden tear from his eye.

Sudden as a lightning-stroke, a moisture dimmed the large, lustrous orbs of the stranger, and he turned his head hastily aside.

"Come, come in, Mr. Morton; I forgot myself, sir, at the mention of Tom's name. Come in, sir; though my cabin is an humble place for such as you," and he glanced at his guest again, "yet, if you know Tom, sir, you *must* be a good man, and one not ashamed of honest poor folks, for such was my boy."

The stranger walked in at once, and seated himself on one of the rude chairs of the cabin.

"Thank you kindly," he said. "I promised Tom to call and see you. He sent several messages by me to Pittsburg—among them one to you, and here I am. I only arrived two hours since."

"May God bless you, sir, for your kindness! And was Tom well, sir? Was he still mindful of old Ben? And where was he, sir, when he gave you the message for me?"

The stranger started, but, after a moment's hesitation, replied:

"Tom was well, and always spoke of you with the warmest affection. When I saw him, some months ago, he was far away from this! But Tom has been fortunate, since he was here."

"Fortunate? And how, sir? I know he had good luck in some things, but to what do you refer?"

"He has had a good deal of money left him," replied the stranger, quietly, glancing at the old man.

"I'm glad, indeed, to hear it, sir," said Ben, promptly; "for if ever man deserved the smiles of heaven, Tom Worth was that man! To tell you the truth, Mr. Morton," and he drew his chair confidentially toward the richly-clad gentleman, "there was something strange about Tom—that boy of mine. He was wonderful book-learned, sir, and though he had thaws of steel and muscles of iron, and a fist that could shiver an inch-thick oak plank, yet that hand, though he worked in the mine, was always so white, so fine, so like a *gentleman's*, sir, that I often thought, though I didn't say it, that Tom was not exactly what he seemed to be. And then, Mr. Morton, Tom was so gentle, so respectful, sir, to the women. And I tell you, sir, that such a man is a *true* man, and one as don't forget he has had a mother, sir."

The stranger listened intently, his eyes fixed on the old man's face—those eyes wet still.

"You speak words of wisdom, my friend," he said in a low voice, one deeply enthusiastic from emotion, "and you are right—such men are true men."

"Yes, Mr. Morton; and Tom Worth was one of them! And then, too, in a rough-and-tumble, my stars, sir! he was a perfect lion, and— But do you know his story, sir? He had a little trouble hereabouts!"

The old man spoke cautiously.

"Yes," replied the stranger; "I know Tom Worth's story, every word, and I know, too, that Tom was innocent."

"Innocent? Of course he was! And he would be a brave man, as I have said more than once, who would contradict me! Though—though—truth be told, for a long time, Tom himself would not say whether or not he was."

"Perhaps he had his reasons," suggested Mr. Morton, softly.

"Of course, sir, of course!" was the reply. "That was Tom! Reasons for everything, and good ones! God be thanked that I have heard from him again!"

A silence of some minutes ensued, the stranger bending his head in thought, old Ben sitting with his eyes half-closed, a pleasant smile spreading over his countenance as his mind, doubtless, was traveling back over the past. The old man was thinking of Tom Worth, and the other was thinking of—what?

Suddenly the old man broke the silence by saying:

"You have brought me news, Mr. Morton—good, glorious news for me, and the same for another!" and he glanced familiarly at the stranger, as if courting a confidence.

Mr. Morton started; his face flushed slightly, and his mustached lip trembled. But he asked, quietly:

"What do you mean, Mr. Walford?"

"Why, sir, there can be no harm in telling you, for you are Tom's friend. Why, sir, Tom was a handsome lad, and he had, truth be told, a wondrous way with the women. And, sir—why Tom was in love, and in love with a rich man's daughter."

The old man paused.

Mr. Morton drew still nearer to the miner, his gaze fixed upon him earnestly, expectantly.

"Well, Mr. Walford?"

"And, sir, the girl—God bless her for a noble woman—loved Tom more than any plain, blunt words of mine can tell you, sir. And she would have married Tom in spite of everything had my boy stayed; but, poor thing—"

Again the old man paused.

Mr. Morton was now showing signs of excitement. He placed his hand upon the old man's arm, and said, in a deep whisper:

"Yes, yes, Mr. Walford; what of this poor

girl, who loved the humble Tom Worth of those days?"

"Why, sir, poor thing, she has almost grieved herself to death after him. In spite of all I could say and swear to her, she believes Tom is dead—was drowned, sir. Why—would you believe it—she has been wearing black for Tom these two years past! Don't that show love, sir? Again I say, may God bless that woman!"

"Amen!" echoed Mr. Morton, and a tear dimmed his eye; nor did the turning of his head conceal his emotion from old Ben.

"And now, sir, the other part of your good news," said the miner, softly, "is that I can tell Miss Grace positively that Tom is *not* dead, and that, perhaps, nay, I *know* it, sir! that, though he is rich now, yet he is true to her still!"

"Ay, my friend! True to the death!" said the stranger, somewhat vehemently—so much so, indeed, that old Ben glanced at him quickly.

"But," continued Mr. Morton, as he saw the effect of his words, "it will not do *now* to tell the—this young lady of me. We will wait; I have my reasons."

"Of course, sir, of course. And I am so glad to hear from Tom; I'd almost be willing to die without ever seeing old England if my eyes could fall on Tom. God grant it."

"You may see him yet, Mr. Walford, who knows?" said the stranger, quickly. "But," he continued, as if recollecting himself, "I have with me a letter from Tom for you. Here it is," and he drew it from his pocket and handed it over.

The old man took it with an air almost reverential; fondled it for a moment in his large hands, and gazed affectionately at the superscription.

"Yes, 'tis from Tom!" he muttered; "I know his writing—so clear, so strong and fine, like printing! But, sir, my old eyes are dim; read that letter for me. I would not miss a single word for ten dollars in gold! Read it, sir, for me. If you are a friend of Tom Worth, and I believe you are, there can be no secrets in it from you. Read it, Mr. Morton; for, though your beard is white, your eyes—I know it—are younger and sharper than mine."

The stranger started at these words, and a smile flashed over his face; but, he took the letter, opened it, and spread out the sheet. As he did so, several bank-notes fell down. The stranger quietly picked them up and laid them on the table.

The old miner looked at the money, and then bowed his head.

"I will read Tom's letter, if you are ready," said Mr. Morton, after a pause, in a low voice.

"Read, read on, sir," and the old man did not raise his head.

After another moment's hesitation, the stranger read in a steady, but subdued voice, as follows:

"DEAR BEN:—"

"God be thanked that I can write to you again, and tell you that I have not forgotten you! Though many long months have rolled by since we parted on the banks of the river, yet, Ben, you are dear to me still. I have undergone much since I last saw you—ay, suffered much, but through all I have remembered you, the only *true* friend I ever had! I am far away now, Ben—far away from you and our dear old cabin on the hillside where you and your 'boy' have passed so many happy, *honest* hours together—"

The stranger's voice wavered; old Ben's giant frame shook like an aspen leaf.

"And, Ben, it may be," resumed the stranger, reading from the letter, "that we will never meet there. If such should be God's will, bow to it, Ben, and pray with me, that we may meet in the bright hereafter. I have inclosed to you, Ben, notes to the value of one hundred pounds—the money of your native land—old England, so dear to you. I can afford it. Take it, Ben; it comes a free gift from one who loves you more tenderly than words can tell. Good-by, Ben—I cannot say *forever*; but, should it be decreed that we meet no more on earth, do your whole part as a God-fearing man to meet me in the better land. May God bless you!"

"Tom."

For five minutes there was a complete silence; and then, as if fearing to speak, the old miner slowly raised his tear-bedewed face.

"I'll do it, Tom! I'll do it!" he whispered, in a deep tone, as if addressing the shade of his absent friend. "Trust me, Tom, for, with God's help, I will do it—will do *all*, *anything* to meet you again, my noble boy!"

He took the notes, pressed them silently to his lips, and placed them away in his bosom, as if they were souvenirs too sacred to place elsewhere.

The stranger's bosom heaved; his own stalwart frame shook; a pearly tear dropped down, and then another, and another, on his long white beard. He laid the open letter on the table, and rising, turned without a word to the door.

Suddenly, however, quick as lightning, he faced the old man, and as he raised his tall form, his chest rising and falling tumultuously, he cried aloud:

"BEN!"

One wild, startled look, a convulsive gasping, and the old man reeled and fell forward, his

brawny arms, now nerveless, clutching the other passionately around the neck.

"God be praised!" was all old Ben could say, as he drew the form of the richly-clad stranger to his bosom, and held him there in a giant's grasp.

CHAPTER XXIX.

BREAD CAST UPON THE WATERS.

THE sun had been up for an hour the next morning, when the tall, aristocratic Mr. Morton went forth from the humble cabin of the miner. And when he left it was in company with old Ben, who blithely took his way toward the "Black Diamond," where he was still a valuable hand.

The stranger did not in the least seem ashamed of old Ben's humble, grimy miner's suit, nor of the plain, unpretending appearance of the hard-working old man. They conversed earnestly and socially together, until they reached the Mount Washington road. Here Ben struck across the hillside toward the mines, and Mr. Morton hurried on down the road, in the direction of the Smithfield street bridge.

When the stranger reached the foot of the road and stood on the abutment of the bridge, he paused a moment, and glanced up at the towering precipice of the coal hills. His eyes wandered about restlessly for a few seconds; but, finally they settled on the black, cavernous opening of a mine. Just then a brawny figure stood by that far-away hole, but in a moment more had disappeared within the black depths.

Mr. Morton sighed gently, and then, almost instantly, a proud, triumphant smile flashed over his features. But the smile passed off, too, and a serious, determined look settled on his fine face. Seeing, however, that he was attracting considerable attention from passers-by, he hurriedly turned about, and strode on over the bridge toward the city.

Just before he reached his hotel, at the further end of the bridge, he muttered, in an abstracted manner:

"Very strange! wondrous strange! These mutations in fortune! Stranger still that these two characters should play *roles* in this mysterious drama! 'Tis difficult to forget past events. There's foul-play, double-dealing, rascality somewhere! It may be well to investigate the matter; something curious may be brought to light, for the man is a scoundrel, if one walks the earth!"

With these strange words, Mr. Morton passed on and entered the Monongahela House—no one paying any special heed to him.

This same day, after some searching about, which he did in a carriage and very leisurely, Mr. Morton engaged an elegant suite of rooms in a private house on Penn street, and had his numerous articles of baggage sent hither from the hotel. The stranger seemed to court privacy.

The conversation which was held the night before between old Ben and his visitor was prolonged until far into the small hours.

"Ayant the twal!"

And that conversation, though carried on in a low tone, was unflagging and earnest. In the course of it several names familiar to the readers of this story were mentioned more than once.

At last, however, when the conference was closed, the stranger unceremoniously threw himself upon Ben's bed and was soon wrapt in profound slumber.

'Tis needless, here, to detail the conversation of that night of surprise and joy to old Ben—joy that once again he had heard from Tom Worth, his "boy."

We cannot wonder, then, after keeping such late hours, however good his company, that Mr. Morton looked somewhat haggard this morning, as he hurried into his hotel.

The day passed slowly away. After having had his baggage transferred to his room in Penn street, Mr. Morton occupied the time in writing, reading, and then in overhauling several of his trunks.

With old Ben Walford the hours had flown swiftly, merrily away. He seemed like a new man, did this old miner, and those around him in the shafts and dark galleries of the underground world noticed his changed demeanor, and paused more than once to hearken to his bold snatches of song, which now and then rung through the pit.

Old Ben was happy.

Why should he not be? He had heard from Tom, and his "boy" had sent him a large sum of money!

And then, too, Ben had the promise of another early visit from the white-whiskered Mr. Morton, to whom it was evident the old miner had taken a wondrous liking.

Night had once more fallen upon the city and its suburbs. The raw autumn wind was blowing lustily, betokening by its chilly breath the early coming of the winter. A racing squadron of leaden clouds was flying across the sky, and no moon or stars, save at long intervals, mirrored their silvery images in the bosom of the broad rivers hurrying by the dark city.

It was the night after the arrival of the mys-

terious stranger—the night after Fairleigh Somerville's induction as owner into the princely mansion on Stockton avenue—the night after Richard Harley was led away from the lordly dwelling, lately his, to an humble home on Cedar avenue—led away by his dove-eyed, sad-faced daughter in black.

The hour was ten, and in this sober, staid little suburb of Pittsburgh—Alleghany City—the lamp-lighters were already extinguishing the gas in the streets; for, in this exemplary borough, lone in certain localities, the citizens had long since retired for the night, and there was no need of light.

The gas-lamps along the quiet, unpretending Cedar avenue had ceased to fling out their glimmer for over an hour. But in one small, humble house on this retired street there beamed forth a light. It came from a curtainless window on the first floor of the little tenement.

Two figures, both brawny and athletic, crept cautiously along the lonely avenue. They paused once or twice to look around them, but only for a moment.

"I must—I must be satisfied!" muttered one of the men. "I cannot sleep until I have found their abode."

"Yes, yes, sir; I know your feelings, and—Ha! 'sh! 'sh! There, sir! there!" and the other sunk his voice to a whisper, even lower than that in which they had been conversing.

The first speaker paused and glanced across the street, in the direction his companion had pointed. He started as if shot, and trembling in every limb, sunk back against the fencing which skirted the Common. But he gazed again.

Just opposite from these two men was the curtainless window, aglow with light, to which we have referred. Standing in the broad flash, which sparkled from the window, was a tall, stately maiden, with a sad visage, her hair falling in disarray—her eyes red with weeping, her arms gently clasping an old man round the neck—the old man leaning motionless over the back of a chair.

In an instant, however, the maiden released her arms from the old man's neck, and going to the window flung up the sash and drew the shutters hastily to.

The tall man without, who had staggered back against the friendly railing, slowly straightened up and whispered:

"Come, my friend; I now have seen! We must be gone."

The two hurried swiftly away from the spot toward the black-bosomed river. As they passed a single solitary lamp, left burning, as it were, by an oversight, the rays flashed upon them; but they were gone so quickly that he who came last was only revealed. He was an old man with a giant frame, hard-featured and honest-faced.

They hurried away, and in ten minutes entered a carriage on Federal street and drove off toward the Suspension Bridge.

The day following, about ten o'clock in the morning, an elegant carriage drew up in front of a lowly two story house on Cedar avenue, in Alleghany City, and Felix Morton descended from the vehicle.

"Drive to the corner yonder and await me; I will come in a few moments," he said.

"Yes, sir," replied the coachman, obsequiously.

Mr. Morton paused as the carriage drove off, and gazed covertly, half-pityingly at that unpretending tenement, now sheltering one who, in a former day, had boasted of his great wealth.

Just then old Ben Walford, staggering along under a huge basket, rapped at the little side alley. Ben had a holiday this morning from the mine, and a joyous glow was overspreading his face. It may have been that the holiday occasioned this; or, perhaps it was the result of the hundred pounds his absent friend Tom Worth had sent him by this same stranger.

The old man did not seem surprised at seeing Mr. Morton, though it was evident that the latter was startled at the sight of the miner.

"This is my offering, sir," said the old man, in a low voice, smiling sweetly and good-naturedly.

Mr. Morton did not answer; he simply placed his gloved finger upon his lips, and turning at once, walked up the steps and rung the bell.

Old Ben disappeared in the alley, and in a moment a glad, joyous voice—that of a female—was heard welcoming him warmly. Then there was a silence, and then a sob. Then old Ben's honest words were heard, saying sternly:

"Bear up, bear up, Miss Grace! You've friends still, and you see old Ben has found you and he thinks more o' you than ever!"

Mr. Morton's frame shook. But suddenly shambling footsteps were heard within the hall; then the bolt was turned by a feeble hand. The door opened, and poor old Richard Harley, sad and worn, anxious and haggard, clad in dressing-gown and slippers, stood there.

The stranger evidently had need to control himself; but despite his efforts, he shook in every limb, and a yearning, sympathizing look came to his face, as his eyes fell on the ruined ex-iron-merchant. But he managed to force a composure to his face, and self-possession in his manner.

Mr. Harley himself started back as he saw the richly-clad stranger standing there; and, do what he could, a blush of shame came to his cheeks, and then a tear dimmed his eye.

Mr. Morton pretended not to see these traces of emotion, and said, with a bow:

"I presume this is Mr. Richard Harley?"

"Yes, sir, I am he. Walk in, sir. I am poorly established as yet, sir, but—"

"Not a word, Mr. Harley," interrupted the other, hastily. "Excuse me for not entering, sir. I am somewhat pressed for time to-day, and, as I have called on business, I'll be brief, sir."

He paused for a moment, Mr. Harley looking at him all the time with wondering eyes.

"My name is Felix Morton, sir," continued the stranger, hastily. "I have been empowered by a friend of mine—a former acquaintance, I believe, of yours, long months since—to hand you this parcel. I have guarded it carefully, sir, and now beg to place it in your hands, and I wish you good-morning, sir."

Mr. Harley took the parcel as one in a dream; but before he could speak Mr. Morton had gone.

The old man shuffled back into the room, and sunk in a seat. As soon as he could recover himself he tore open, with trembling fingers, the stout package or envelope. A sheet of paper fell out. The old man spread it open, and took therefrom several bank-notes.

With amazement showing in every feature—more as if he was dreaming than waking—the old man again spread out the sheet and read the following:

"MY DEAR SIR:—"

"I have not forgotten your kindness to me, long ago, on the East Liberty road, when you took me in and sheltered me. And though I and my fortunes, since then, have been under a cloud, yet I have not ceased to remember you with gratitude, whatever your feelings have been toward me. Remember me—if you can conquer unseemly prejudice—to Grace, and assure her of my unchanging love. I enclose a sum which may serve to show you—though you are a rich man—that I am not lacking in gratitude. May God bless you under all circumstances, and may He bless Grace, too. I send this by a safe hand, and though many miles are before him, he will deliver it safely. You will know who I am when I sign myself
Yours, with gratitude,
"TOM WORTH."

The letter fluttered down, and the old man gazed speechlessly at the four fifty-pound notes which had dropped from the parcel. And then, as a heartfelt prayer of gratitude was going up from his soul, he felt a hand laid gently upon his shoulder.

Grace Harley, as always, clad in black, was standing there, and her eyes were filled with tears—her lips were trembling, and a holy love and joy were filling her bosom.

She had read every line of Tom's letter!

CHAPTER XXX.

A LEGAL DOCUMENT DRAWN AT MIDNIGHT.

It was a dark night, just one week after the occurrences detailed in the previous chapter. But few lights were as yet lit in the streets of Pittsburgh, and over on the black crest of the Coal Hills everything was in absolute gloom.

Though the night was somber and dismal—though the beetling line of the Coal Hills was wrapped in darkness, yet within the cabin of old Ben, the miner, a bright light was burning, brighter than customary.

The old man had company, and company which he evidently prized. The coarse shutters to the single window were closed and bolted, and the common curtain of calico was dropped before the narrow panes. Not a ray from the flaming lamp stole forth to let those outside know that there were wakeful eyes in this humble home of the miner.

Mr. Felix Morton had laid aside his overcoat, and was seated comfortably near the little stove. He was leaning his head slightly forward, and his face was overcast with a shade of deep, anxious thought. With this expression was mingled one of conviction and settled determination.

Opposite to him, his eyes bent intently upon his guest, was old Ben. It was plain that an earnest conversation had been held, and that now the pause was temporary.

"No, Mr. Walford," said the stranger, as if his mind was fully made up, "I am more than ever convinced that a most dastardly wrong has been committed. Ever since, on my arrival, I learned of this singular, this deplorable state of affairs, I have been thinking of the matter, and laying my plans. Fairleigh Somerville is a scoundrel of the deepest dye!"

"I agree with you there, Mr. Morton; but it seems very strange to me—though I am an unlearned man—that old Harley should be so dumb, sir—so unbusiness-like, as to let the fellow take advantage of him. You know, sir, that the old man did make a big fortune, and he must have had judgment and brains to do it."

"That may all be, but I have learned enough to know that Mr. Harley spent money recklessly—that he went security for irresponsible parties—that he lost thousands upon thousands of dollars upon ventures that were mere phantoms. Now, it is not a hard matter to imagine the old man as

anxious to retrieve his fortune—to make his money back, you know."

There was a pause. Old Ben seemed struck with the words of the other.

"You are right, sir, right, as you always are. I see through it now," he said, approvingly.

Then ensued a low conversation, which lasted several moments. At length old Ben said, aloud:

"Exactly; but how about the house, and—"

"I was going on to say, that this fellow, being aware of the financial condition of Mr. Harley, offered to advance the necessary money for the investment—this investment, as I remarked, a fraudulent one. He allowed the matter to go on from time to time, and then finally pushed the old gentleman for a settlement. There being no funds, this man took a lien on the mansion as his security. Do you see?"

"Exactly, Mr. Morton; that is, to a certain extent. But, you know, I am no scholar; and how, if this was a speculation matter, the old merchant couldn't see through it—as no returns, dividends, or whatever you call them, failed to come in?"

Mr. Morton hesitated, but only for a moment.

"With a man like Somerville," he said, "one who has such a smooth tongue and so plausible a manner—we can readily credit him with inventing reasons for anything. You know him of old. But the time will come!" and the stranger smiled grimly, though he continued at once. "You may be satisfied, then, that in this matter he blinded the old man. I am certain I am not far from being right. And I'll probe the matter to the bottom! Justice to more than one shall be done!" and the stranger's eyes flashed as he spoke.

Old Ben glanced at him, pondered for a moment and then said, slowly:

"You are right, Mr. Morton. I see it all plain enough now; and as you say, sir, justice must be done! I haven't forgotten old days and certain deeds! We'll work together, sir!"

"I have reckoned on you all along," said Mr. Morton, quietly, "and the sooner we work, the better."

"I am ready, sir, and waiting," replied old Ben, promptly.

A conversation, carried on in a low breath, ensued, lasting until a late hour in the night. Then Mr. Morton arose.

"It shall be so," he said, decidedly. "The work is hazardous, but we will do it. If we are detected—especially should we be wrong in our surmises—I will not deny but that we run a great risk. But the stake is too great, and the probabilities too much in our favor, for us to withdraw from the venture now."

"You can count on me, sir, in any event in this or any other work." The old miner spoke very decidedly.

Another pause ensued, but the stranger soon broke the silence by saying:

"Be sure to call on Launce to-morrow. I searched him out myself. You can approach him better than I can. I am satisfied that he is an honest man at heart, and has been the dupe of this scoundrel. See him, and—why, you know, if money is needed, call on me. Be ready to-morrow night. I will reconnoiter the premises to-day. If such an evidence is in existence, it must be near his person. But, wherever it may be, we must have it. Good night!"

In another moment, having thrown his overcoat over his shoulders, the stranger opened the door and hurried forth.

When he had gone, old Ben approached the table, and drawing the lamp near him, examined closely the plan of a house rudely sketched on a sheet of paper.

"I can do it, if I am old and stiff!" he muttered. "And I half-way believe Mr. Morton is right. What a wonderful man is this stranger who brought me such good news of my noble boy, Tom!"

Then he extinguished the lamp; and, as a low chuckle escaped his lips, the old man sought his couch.

Another day dawned and passed away, and the shades of night gloomed again over the earth. A cold northeast wind was blowing rudely over the sleeping city; a drizzling, searching rain was falling, and the night was dismal in the extreme.

Long since the streets had been deserted; for, in addition to the cheerless out-door scene, the hour was late. The clock from a neighboring iron-mill had just struck twelve.

Suddenly two figures, well wrapt in long cloaks, emerged from the shadows by the Fort Wayne depot, and took their way toward Stockton avenue. They were soon in this dark street. They paused for a moment and glanced behind them, and then ahead.

"We are near the house," whispered one of the men; "we must be careful. Did you see the man?"

"Yes, sir; he is all right—is an honest man, after all, and wants no money. He is anxious to be free from that villain; but for one week his hands are bound by an oath. He has a high opinion of an oath, sir."

"And I of him, on that account! He shall not lack for a friend when he needs one. But, come; we have work before us. Have your pistol ready. We must deal with villains, if other

arguments fail, with powder and ball, and I solemnly swear that I will know the truth in this matter!"

"You are right, sir, and I am ready," was the quiet response.

Without another word the two walkers strode swiftly, though cautiously, onward. A few moments elapsed when they suddenly paused. They were standing in the shade of the imposing Harley mansion, now the residence of Fairleigh Somerville, the millionaire. The men again glanced cautiously around them. Then the taller of the two gently opened the inner gate, and entered the front yard. His companion followed.

They hesitated not, but took their way noiselessly to the curved archway, leading by an alley, to the rear of the dwelling.

The raw wind still moaned along the streets, and the cold rain pattered ceaselessly down.

The men, bent on such a mysterious errand, soon stood in the yard or court to the rear.

"He sleeps there," whispered one of the men, at the same time pointing to a window of a room on the second story. "An iron hook is below that window-sill; I know it well. Be guarded now, as you value life itself, and cast the ladder!"

The other, silently, and without replying, drew from beneath his cloak a coil of rope knotted with cross pieces so as to form a ladder. He glanced up and measured the distance with his eye. Then, dropping the cloak from his shoulders, he slung the coil slowly around his head several times, and then let fly.

But in an instant the rope rattled down again. Thanks, however, to the sighing wind, and the pattering rain, the ladder gave forth no sound as it fell.

Again the man flung the coil—again it came down; and again and again.

"Toss higher, and more to the right," whispered the other, who seemed to superintend matters.

The man obeyed. This time a half-cry of satisfaction escaped his lips, for the ladder had caught. The man tried it with his hand—then with his full weight. The ladder was firm.

"Let me go first," whispered the taller man, his voice beginning to be tremulous with excitement. As he spoke, he drew from his pocket a small revolving pistol, and placed it in his vest-bosom. Then he secured the long cloak around his waist with a stout cord. He waited no longer, but grasping the side-lines of the slender ladder, swung his feet from the ground, and began the ascent.

In a moment he had reached the window. He gently unhooked the shutters and swung them noiselessly back. Then he tried the window. A joyous cry almost burst from his lips as the sash moved up without a sound under his touch.

Beckoning his companion to follow him, the tall man placed his hands on the window-sill and leaped lightly into the room. Scarcely breathing, and not stirring hand or muscle, he stood still until the other below had flung his cloak again over his shoulders, and, securing it around him, mounted the ladder.

A moment, and he, too, was in the apartment, standing silent and motionless by the side of him who had entered first.

The room was in absolute darkness. The men listened intently. At first they could hear nothing; but after a few moments, the long-drawn, heavy breathing of a sleeping man was borne to their ears.

One of the men took from beneath his coat a dark-lantern, and springing it on, paused. The straight flash of light gleamed out, and in an instant lit up the room. Among other things, it revealed the men who had come on this bold enterprise. But nothing could be seen of them save that their forms were enveloped in long cloaks, and their faces hidden beneath black masks.

The man who held the lantern slowly and cautiously turned the light around. At last its beams fell upon a bed. Lying on that bed was Fairleigh Somerville, locked deep in slumber. The tall man softly approached the sleeper's couch. His feet seemed shod with down—so noiselessly he walked. A moment, and he stood over him who slept so soundly. A wild, violent convulsion swept over his frame, and in a moment he had thrust his right hand into his bosom.

"Villain! your day comes! *Its dawn is breaking!*" said the masked man, in a hoarse whisper, as he turned off toward his companion. "He sleeps soundly," he continued; "we have nothing to fear; we'll to work!"

The men at once drew near the table. On this table were spread papers in wild confusion and disarray. While his companion held the lantern, the other—the taller man—leaned over and set to work to examine the papers hurriedly.

The sleeping man moved not, and naught was heard in the room save the faint rustle of the papers, the sighing of the wind, and the monotonous dropping of the rain.

Suddenly the man paused in his search, and, reeling back, gasped for breath.

Then he slowly pointed to a page in a memorandum-book which he had spread open.

"Read, read, my friend! *Read the truth!* for we have now conquered, indeed!" His voice was hoarse and hissing, yet still guarded, as he spoke.

The other leaned down and glanced at the scribbled lines; but he shook his head.

"Read it for me," he replied, in a cautious whisper, his words short and excited. "You know I am only an uneducated man and no scholar."

His companion drew him down, and in a voice so low that it was scarcely audible, he read:

"This day closes my advances for old Harley. I wonder if he has found out the ruse of the oil well yet? No. He can never find it out! And I now hold his fine mansion, legally, for a loan of sixty thousand dollars! Ha! ha! And, in a week, I'll claim the house or the money. Nice speculation! Ha! ha! ha! and the old fool, nor his white-faced daughter, dream not of my revenge—oh! how sweet!"

The men uttered not a word. The one who had read the entry in the memorandum-book shook violently. The other looked on, and his brawny hands clutched each other viciously. The tall man pondered for a moment, and then whispered:

"We have conquered, and justice shall now be done! *Ay, this hour!* Watch him! If he moves before I am done writing, throttle him! Spare him not!"

He instantly seated himself softly by the table and drew toward him pen and paper. Then he began to write rapidly.

The other at once moved cautiously to the bedside and kept his gaze bent on the man who slept so soundly.

A moment or so elapsed, when he who was writing arose slowly to his feet. On the table lay a half-sheet which he had hastily written over. Without speaking to his companion further than to say:

"Be ready for anything!" he approached the bed at once. Laying his hand on the shoulder of him who slept, he said, hoarsely:

"Awake, Fairleigh Somerville! Awake, I say! *Justice calls you!*"

The sleeper started and sprang upon his elbow. One glance at the two dark-clad masked figures, and he was about to cry out. But, instantly, a pistol-barrel was pressed to his temple, and a hoarse voice said in his ear:

"One cry, Fairleigh Somerville, and by the Lord that judges all things, I'll send a bullet through your brain! Be still and be wise! Now, man, retribution has overtaken you! Here!" and he dragged him fiercely from the bed to the table; "do you recognize that writing?" and he pointed with shaking finger to the entry in the memorandum-book.

Fairleigh Somerville almost sunk to the floor, and his teeth chattered with fright.

"Ay, I see you recognize it! Now, villain," continued the tall man, in a low, freezing tone: "Sign that paper which I have written. Here it is; sign it, and we will witness it!"

"What—what is it?" gasped the man.

"A deed of quit-claim and transfer which I have drawn to suit my purpose, of this mansion and the furniture it contains to its rightful owner, old Richard Harley, whom you have so basely defrauded."

"Oh, God! I cannot! I will not!"

"Then, by Heaven, I'll shoot you through the head!" and the tall man clutched him by the throat, and pressed the pistol again to his head. His grasp tightened upon the writhing neck of the other, and his finger was upon the creaking trigger.

"Hold! hold!" stammered the poor wretch. "Release me; take away the pistol and I will sign."

"Good! Now mark me, Somerville: if you are to be found in this house day after to-morrow, you need not hope to escape a righteous vengeance which has been tracking you for years! Swear to me that you will vacate this house to-morrow. Swear at once—or you know the consequences!"

"Yes—yes! I—I—swear!"

"All's well, then. Now affix your name to that sheet of writing, and be quick about it!"

Somerville took the pen held out to him in his trembling grasp, and again glanced over the few clear, bold and unmistakable words which had been so hastily written. He hesitated and turned away: his face paled and wrinkled into a frown. But he felt the eye of the unknown stranger burning into his very soul, through that hideous black mask, and with a desperate gesture and a fearful oath, the baffled man drove the pen rapidly along the line pointed out for his signature. He then shoved the paper toward the one who had thus conquered him.

The man glanced at the signature and muttered:

"All right; now my friend and myself will witness it."

As he spoke, he drew the paper to the other side of the table, and, taking a pen, quickly affixed his name. Motioning to his companion to do the same, he drew to one side.

Whatever might have been his friend's intentions, he was certainly wondrous slow in signing his name. Perhaps it was because his hands were so large and horny. But at last he laid the pen down with a satisfied air.

The tall man took the paper, and folding it up, placed it carefully in his bosom.

"'Tis well, Fairleigh Somerville," he said; "and you may thank your good angel that you have escaped thus lightly. Remember your oath and be wise. Now we will go. Of course you can speak of this if you choose."

"And who—who are you?" gasped Somerville, for he had not seen the signatures.

"Why, look at me, Fairleigh Somerville, and say if you can recall me and my memory now?"

As he spoke, he suddenly hurled his mask aside, and peered in the face of the other.

"My God! my God!" muttered Somerville, and fell to the floor.

Another moment and the tall man, followed by his brawny companion, had disappeared through the window which was still open.

CHAPTER XXXI.

GATHERING THE HARVEST.

BUT Fairleigh Somerville quickly recovered from the shock. He sprang to his feet, struck a match and lit the gas. The brilliant light showed his face distorted by fear and passion; he was foaming at the mouth, and his eyes were bloodshot and staring. He paused not a moment, but hastily slipped on his clothes, and thrusting a revolver in his pocket, hurried from the room.

He took his way noiselessly down-stairs, and snatching an overcoat from the hat-rack, hastened to the front door, unlocked it softly and peered forth. He started back, and half re-entered the house, as he saw, dimly, in the gloom, two tall, brawny figures, indistinct and grotesque, walking rapidly away.

"By heavens!" he muttered. "Fate tells me to follow! and I'll obey. I am entrapped! I am ruined! And yet, *two lucky shots may—*"

The rest of his sentence was lost, as he hastily turned, closed the door softly, and left the house. In a moment he was in the street, and then, hanging close behind those who were ahead of him, he stole onward.

About an hour before day, that same night, the door of old Ben's cabin was suddenly opened, and the light streamed out. In the reflection, standing in the doorway, was the tall form of Felix Morton, the stranger, and just behind him was the brawny figure of old Ben.

A bright glow of triumph shone on the faces of the two men.

"Be sure to meet me in my rooms at the hour appointed, to-morrow evening," said Mr. Morton, loud and unguardedly. "The plan is arranged. I will write the letter in the morning, and I have no doubt of a favorable response. I long to tell the old man the good news in store for him. Poor Grace may yet be happy—if Tom Worth should indeed ever come back! But now, good-night."

"Good-night," said Ben, "and God bless you, my—Mr. Morton!"

But the old man did not at once retire; he stood gazing vacantly in the darkness, after the form of the elegant stranger, who had already disappeared. Then with a low whistle and an ejaculation of satisfaction, the miner reentered his cabin and closed the door.

Scarcely had he gone, when, slowly, from the deep shadow of the house near the little window, a form emerged. The form slowly straightened up.

It was that of a man. He paused for a moment and listened keenly. Then he trod quietly away, until he was out of earshot of the cabin. Then he quickened his pace.

"Furies and fiends!" he muttered, hoarsely, "am I dreaming? Are all the devils in torment leagued against me? Would to God I could overhaul him; but I am too late! Yet—yet—one more effort—one more desperate plunge for revenge, and then I'll be gone from these regions! And now for Launce and Teddy. I'll use them for the last time, and then they—"

The remainder of his words were lost, as he strode on. As he entered upon the Smithfield street bridge, the light shone in his face.

The rays revealed the haggard features of one with whom the reader is acquainted.

But then the man passed on toward the dark, sleeping city.

About ten o'clock the next morning, a letter was handed in at Mr. Harley's abode, in Alleghany City. The old man received the letter himself from the hands of the messenger who brought it. He glanced at the superscription, and then tore open the envelope.

The letter was brief, reading thus:

"MY DEAR SIR:—A week ago I had the honor of placing in your hands a letter with which I had been intrusted. At that time I could not make it convenient to stop over a half-hour with you. Being still, however, in Pittsburg, and having some time at my disposal, I take the liberty of writing to you and telling you I will do myself the pleasure of calling upon you this evening, at eight o'clock exactly, at

which time I hope it may not inconvenience you to receive me. I will, moreover, be able to tell you something of him who sent the letter. Please answer by the bearer. Respectfully, etc.,

FELIX MORTON.

"P. S. I have a little business matter to transact with you, and suggest that you have a friend or so present. Your daughter—I understand you have one—may not object to being a witness to the matter."

F. M."

Mr. Harley read this letter twice, and then calling Grace, showed it to her. The maiden's cheeks paled and then reddened as she read the clear, bold lines.

"I am glad the gentleman is coming, papa," she said; "for his visit may make you more cheerful. And then, oh God! the news of him, now so rich!" and Grace turned softly into the parlor.

"And, my daughter, you shall see this stranger, too; he requests that you should be present," said the old man, kindly.

"If you wish it, papa," was the gentle reply. It was night again.

Felix Morton walked up and down the limits of his splendidly-furnished apartment. There was on his face a well-marked, triumphant look; yet mingled with it was a foreboding anxiety. He had just placed in his pocket a brief letter, which, since its reception that day, he had read over and over again.

"Confound it!" he muttered, "has he forgotten? The hour is late, the time approaching, and he must assist me! Everything else has worked so well!"

He paused and glanced at his watch.

"Only three-quarters of an hour more, and I wouldn't be a minute behind time for—Ha! at last!"

As he spoke, a decided ring sounded on the bell. In a moment or so, after respectfully rapping, old Ben entered the apartment.

"You are late, Ben—Mr. Walford," said the stranger, vexatiously; "but I am glad you are here. You must help me in this matter, you know."

"I had not forgotten, sir; I was coming, of course; and I have business—serious business, with you, my—Mr. Morton."

And the old miner's face was as solemn as were his words.

Mr. Morton started.

"Serious business? Well, quick with it. We have no time to lose."

"Exactly, sir. Well, Mr. Morton, I have just had a visitor at my cabin. The man, Launce, you know, a good fellow and a true comrade, was there; and what do you think he came for? Why, sir, he—" and old Ben sunk his voice to a whisper.

A deep, angry scowl spread over the handsome, white-whiskered face of Mr. Morton, as he heard Ben's news.

"This is serious! The scoundrel is desperate. But it is all so ordered! We must be wary and guarded."

He paused for a moment, as if pondering; but raising his head quickly, he said:

"Hurry around, Mr. Walford, to the police station, and ask the lieutenant for two men. That will do. Tell him enough, but not too much, you know. We can attend to the rest!"

He smiled grimly, as he felt the muscles swelling under his coat-sleeve, and as he glanced at the brawny right arm of old Ben, the miner.

"Hurry, Mr. Walford, and come back at once. I must be dressed for this, my first visit—well and worthily dressed."

The old man, without answering, hurried away. When he returned, which was certainly in ten minutes, Felix Morton, Esq., held in his hands—not loathingly, but tenderly—a queer-looking bundle.

Fifteen minutes from that time two men left the door of the elegant residence on Penn street, and entered a carriage—that of Felix Morton, the aristocrat—standing at the door.

One of these men certainly was old Ben, in his best attire, too; and the other—Well, owing to the glaring of the street lamp just then, a good look at him could not be obtained.

The little parlor of Richard Harley's humble house, on Cedar avenue, was lighted brilliantly—that is, to the extent of two burners. The shutters were closed, and the cheap, though lasting, chintz curtains were dropped to the floor. All was quiet in the room, though the clock on the mantel was somewhat obtrusive with its ominous clicking. The hands of that clock pointed to five minutes to eight.

Gathered in the room, nervous, sedate, anxious and expectant, was a small group. Old Dr. Breeze, the ancient and tried friend of the family, was there, calm, dignified and imperturbable; also, Mr. Harley, restless and excitable.

The most conspicuous figure in the group, however, was Grace Harley. She was clad in pure white, making a wonderful contrast to her accustomed sable attire. A single white rose nestled in her lustrous hair, and her hands—somewhat tremulous—were leaning on a table.

"'Tis late, and he comes not," muttered Mr. Harley, vexatiously. "Can he, too, be playing with me? He—"

"Hush, hush, father!" interrupted the daughter. "I am sure the gentleman will come."

At that moment a furious ring at the bell startled all. In a moment a letter was flung into the passage by one who hurried away. Mr. Harley, who had gone out to answer the bell, picked up the letter and returned to the parlor. As he drew near the light he cast his eyes over the superscription. It was his name, and the handwriting was strange.

The old man nervously tore open the letter, and glanced hurriedly over it. All eyes were upon him as he walked unsteadily back into the room, letting the letter fall negligently from his hand. The old man, however, had read every word!

The crumpled sheet fluttered down at the feet of old Dr. Breeze. The physician stooped, picked it up and read it. Then he quietly and without any show of emotion, save a grim smile, placed the letter in his pocket.

The letter ran thus:

"MR. HARLEY:—You no doubt think you are making a fine acquaintance in this Mr. Felix Morton! Be on your guard; he comes with evil intent! He is one known to you as an evil-doer in the past! But those will be here who will unmask him! He will attempt to abduct your daughter! Be wise."

"ONE WHO KNOWS."

"Oh, father! speak—what—what is this?" exclaimed the maiden, springing to the side of her parent, who was leaning against the wall for support.

"Alas! alas! my daughter—we are indeed friendless. This smooth-tongued man is a deceiver—a villain!"

At that moment the heavy rattle of carriage-wheels was heard. Then the noise ceased just by the door. The bell sounded, and, without waiting for the summons to be answered, the door was opened.

Just then the clock struck eight.

Ere its reverberations had ceased, the parlor door swung back, and a strange sight burst upon the vision of the startled group.

There—brawny, iron-armed and independent—came old Ben Walford, clad in holiday attire—a broad, genial smile of greeting and satisfaction mantling his face.

And there—good heavens!—leaning on the old man's shoulder—erect, athletic, muscular, proud and defiant—was TOM WORTH, the miner.

With one wild, snuddering cry of agonizing joy, Grace Harley, forgetful of all maidenly reserve, forgetful of everything, sprung forward and flung her white arms around the neck of the humbly, coarsely-clad miner.

And Tom Worth, in a loud voice, cried in his old familiar tones:

"God be thanked! she's true as steel!" and he bowed his head, with its curling auburn locks, until his long yellow beard fell in masses over the maiden's shining hair.

A moment of silence, painful and awkward; and then, before any one could speak, the street door was burst open with a crash, and three men—one, his face concealed behind a long black beard, his person by a large, ungainly overcoat—sprung into the room.

"There he is—come to light at last! Now on him, my men—we'll see if two can't play at certain games!" and the speaker darted forward.

Quickly placing the fainting girl in the arms of the old physician, who eagerly clasped his charge, Tom Worth turned like a lion at bay. Old Ben Walford, stern, and terrible to look upon, was in an instant by his side.

"Hold! Stand where you are, or advance at your peril!" exclaimed the young miner, in a deep, fearful voice of warning, at the same time drawing a pistol. "Another step, and I'll spatter your brains on these walls! Now—now—the time has come when villainy shall be exposed! I have long prayed for this occasion, and yet I would have spared you! Now—for you have courted your exposure—I will strip your face of its false covering, and declare you the treacherous scoundrel that you are, FAIRLEIGH SOMERVILLE!"

As the young man spoke, he sprung forward with the bound of a tiger.

The two men met in deadly combat; but he who opposed Tom Worth was, before the young miner's brawn and muscle, a very man of straw. In an instant the false beard was torn from his face, and the long overcoat stripped from his form, revealing none less, indeed, than Fairleigh Somerville, the millionaire.

One of the man's companions sprung forward to the rescue, but, quick as lightning, Old Ben, the miner, was upon him. It was but one ponderous blow, and then another, and the fellow went down like a puppet. Springing upon his prostrate foe, Old Ben clutched him by the throat.

The other man—the man we have known as Launce—stirred not; but on his lips was a smile of satisfaction, and of a triumph he had long looked forward to.

"Now, Fairleigh Somerville!" exclaimed Tom Worth, after a pause in this thrilling scene, "your day comes! I gave you a chance and you have repaid my generosity by attempting this dastardly outrage. Nay, move a muscle,

and, right or wrong, I'll shoot you through the heart."

As he spoke, he placed a call to his lips, and blew a long, shrill whistle. Before the thrilling of the pipe had ceased, the door was opened, and two stalwart policemen entered with drawn revolvers.

"'Tis over, sergeant; you'll have no trouble," said the young miner, quietly. "Now, Fairleigh Somerville," he continued, amid a complete silence, turning to the unmasked villain again, "I charge you with the abduction, over two years ago, of Miss Harley. I knew your designs at the time; yet I would have given you the benefit of all doubt, for I would, above all things, see justice done! You planned that abduction; these poor men, who by some misfortune fell into your power, were your tools, and executed your plans. From a marked resemblance between myself and that man there, who has at last turned into the right path," and he pointed to Launce, "I was arrested. Hence Morley's evidence. The rascally plan was well arranged. Now, look for yourselves!" and as he spoke he placed himself by the side of the other.

There was immediately a loud exclamation of surprise from all; the resemblance was wonderfully striking.

"I bore all, however," continued the young miner, "that justice, full and final, might be done. And now the hour has arrived when justice SHALL be done! Seize that man, sergeant, but let his tools go free; they were misguided—nothing more."

Without waiting for an expected resistance, the officer, beckoning his assistant on, sprung upon the fellow, enforcing the arrest with his pistol. Fairleigh Somerville ground his teeth together in desperation, and he made a frantic effort to get his pistol, as his eyes flashed fire at the man Launce, but he could not shake off the strong grasp of that brawny policeman! Nay, all his boasted wealth could not now purchase his freedom.

Again Tom Worth turned toward the silent, almost speechless group huddled in the further corner of the room. His tall, muscular form was now shaking with excitement. Addressing Mr. Harley, he said, in a low, deep voice:

"I am Tom Worth, once poor and despised—once spurned and contemned by you! But, as Tom Worth, I now, sir, present to you this paper—a valuable one. I secured it at the pistol's mouth—working in the cause of right—from the villain there, who so infamously defrauded you. That paper gives back to you, sir, your entire property. Take it as a gift from Tom Worth, the miner."

Old Richard Harley took the paper from the young man's hands, glanced over it, and uttering a wild, joyful cry, staggered back against the table.

"And, my friends," and his voice was lower than ever, more subdued, more tremulous, "though you all know me as Tom Worth, do you recognize me now?" and in an instant he cast off his dingy miner's suit, hurled aside the yellow beard, and stood there in splendid array, elegant and stately, as the aristocratic, white-bearded Felix Morton, Esq.

But, waiting not for the amazement of all to subside, he continued, hurriedly and excitedly:

"But this, too, is a disguise! See me now, my friends, in my proper person, and this paper, Mr. Harley, will tell you my name."

He stripped the white whiskers from his face, and a stranger, indeed, stood there—a tall, exceedingly handsome man, far this side the prime of life—a long, sweeping, auburn mustache falling over his mouth.

Old Richard Harley, trembling in every limb, gasping for breath, took the paper in his nervous hands and glanced over it.

"My God! CLARENCE, EARL OF ROY!"

And as Fairleigh Somerville, the prisoner, who had been a dreaming, almost idiotic spectator to the scene, was led out by the policeman, Old Ben, the miner, strode to the side of the newly-discovered nobleman, and quietly, reverentially taking the outstretched hand, said, in a low voice:

"Ay! my Lord of Roy, but—my boy still!"

And then, with a cry of a well-won triumph upon his lips, he whom we have known as Tom Worth sprung forward and clasped to his broad chest the fainting form of Grace Harley, the faithful!

And over the two the poor old father spread his trembling hands in a meaningless blessing.

CHAPTER XXXII.

RETRIBUTION.

WE will not lift the curtain on that last scene—that scene so solemn, so grand, at that hour so holy and hushed, when Clarence of Roy and Grace Harley stood in mute embrace—united after many days! On this scene we ring the curtain down.

We will briefly follow the fortunes of others whom we have introduced to the reader. We have seen how patience, long suffering and love have been rewarded; it were a strange tale—not a natural one, truly—which did not have in its course the recital of merited punishment likewise.

The policemen and their prisoner had reached Suspension Bridge without any incident; but as soon as they set foot on the abutment, Somerville, who had been very quiet, suddenly halted, and by a mighty effort burst from the officer who held him.

Turning at once, he leaped into the street below, and sped away like lightning.

So completely were the officers taken by surprise, that the success of the movement was assured. They fired their pistols, but the bullets whistled harmlessly away. A vigorous pursuit was kept up, though the fugitive was never again in sight.

Late that night—about eleven o'clock—a dark form suddenly appeared in front of the old house on Boyd's Hill. It was that of a tall, slender man. He approached the door with staggering, reeling steps, and opened it.

"Thank God!" he exclaimed, in a husky voice, as he entered and struck a light. "Safe—safe! for a time, at least. Now, one more look at my secret, and then I'll be gone."

As he spoke, he mounted a chair by the wall, wherein was concealed the secret panel. He touched the spring—the section gave way, and then the terrible grinning skeleton, in all its ghastliness, came in view.

The hardened wretch gazed mutely on; then of a sudden, a vague trembling seized his limbs.

Fairleigh Somerville had undergone much that night.

"It was *thus* my crime began!" he muttered, in a hoarse voice. "Ha!" he exclaimed; and he turned suddenly, as the wind, blowing rudely over the hill, flung the door open.

"Unlucky movement! As he turned, his foot slipped on the chair. He tottered, and, in endeavoring to recover his balance, fell backward into the yawning cavity.

The sliding panel, jarred into action by the fall, started to its place with the celerity of lightning. A ringing snap and the solid section had walled him in forever!

CHAPTER XXXIII.

CONCLUSION.

We have but little more to add.

Clarence and Grace were at last married. They cared not to linger longer amid the scenes where their troubles had been so multiplied, and the young bride

eagerly consented to follow her noble husband to his grand old castle of Roy, beyond the seas. Old Richard Harley, too—now contented and happy—was anxious to go likewise. So he at once sold his fine mansion. As his title to it was unassailable, he had no difficulty in effecting a sale.

The very night following that of the marriage, the young nobleman and his loving, trusting wife, with her father, left Pittsburg forever. They went to New York. Old Ben, the miner, glad of the opportunity of getting back to his native England, bade adieu to the "Black Diamond" and his little cabin, and accompanied the party in the employment of Clarence. In one week they sailed for Liverpool.

The tale of Clarence of Roy is briefly told. He was the younger son of a noble family, away in the northwestern part of England. He was his father's favorite, but by his elder brother and stepmother he was hated. These two conspired against him, and managed to bring about a fierce quarrel between him and the hot-tempered old earl, his father. The result was that the young man was forbidden the ancestral castle of Roy, and set adrift in the world without a shilling in his pocket.

He was a proud fellow, and he had gone abroad—working his way—had served in Her Majesty's Indian army—had lived in Calcutta, afterward in Hong Kong, and at last had found his way to the grand asylum for the persecuted—America. Then he had come to Pittsburg. Long before he was known as Tom Worth he and Grace Harley had met under peculiar circumstances—and met to love. But on that period—a dark one to the lovers—it is not our purpose to dwell.

The letter from abroad brought the young man in prison—as the reader will remember—by Old Ben was from the solicitor of the estate of Roy, telling the exiled Clarence of the death of his father—and of the consequent strife between the elder brother and the stepmother. The letter stated that the strife had culminated in a division. Then the elder brother had been suddenly killed in a fox-chase; and then, on certain papers being found, the law had dispossessed the stepmother of all the estates, save a small property as dowry. Hence, the letter went on to say, Clarence—or Tom Worth as *we* best know him—was sole heir to the large property, and, of course, successor to the title.

The solicitor had always been a friend of the disinherited son, and was in cor-

respondence with him in his misfortunes whithersoever his wanderings led him.

The young man, as we have seen, heeded the summons, despite surrounding circumstances. On reaching England, he found a great deal of law matter to be attended to, which, before it was finally settled, consumed over two years' time. This all arranged, however, to his satisfaction, he bent on claiming his long-ago conquest, hastened across the water again as Felix Morton, Esq.—a gentleman of means—to seek out his first and only love.

Ten years have elapsed since the day Clarence and Grace sailed away from New York; and to-day the young nobleman—yes, he is still young—with his sweet wife and prattling children, is happy in his ancient castle of Roy.

Several years since, old Richard Harley died at a ripe old age in the castle, blessing those he left.

Our friend Ben Walford to this day is the trusted steward of the old stronghold, and performs his duties to the satisfaction of all.

Hanging on the wall, in the library of the castle, is a small, richly-gilded frame. It contains simply a half-sheet of note-paper, written closely over. A portion of it reads strangely thus:

"—And the said Fairleigh Somerville hath remised, released and quit-claimed, and by these presents doth remise, release and quit-claim, unto the said Richard Harley, his heirs and assigns forever, all that property known as the Harley Mansion, on Stockton avenue, in the Alleghany City, State of Pennsylvania."

To this sheet of paper appear as witnesses two names, viz., TOM WORTH and BENJAMIN WALFORD.

Only two years since, on tearing down the old house on Boyd's Hill, two grinning skeletons were found in a secret panel of the wall. They were recognized, the one by a golden chain around the rattling ribs, as—ALICE POWERS, once a rival of Somerville in some love affair, and who had mysteriously disappeared years before; the other—by a flashing diamond on the skeleton finger, as—FAIRLEIGH SOMERVILLE.

We must not forget to state that Launce and Teddy were amply provided for by Clarence of Roy, before he left Pittsburg, and that these poor fellows, ever afterward, lived honest, exemplary lives.

Reader, our tale is told, and we have reached the point where we must separate, namely:

Under Sentence of Death;

OR,

THE FAIR FERRET'S FIGHT TO THE FINISH.

BY DR. NOEL DUNBAR.

CHAPTER I.

A SCRAP OF PAPER AND A TRAGEDY.

"I HAVE called to surrender myself to you, sir, upon a charge that will be preferred against me in the morning."

"Of what are you accused?" asked the chief of police, looking fixedly into the handsome face of a stylishly dressed young man, who had appeared before him just as he was leaving his office for the night.

"I have not yet been accused, but will be."

"What will the charge be?"

"Murder!"

"Ah! and who have you murdered?" asked the chief with increasing interest in his visitor.

"No one."

"How then can you be accused if you have murdered no one?" and the chief suspected that in spite of his appearance to the contrary, he had a crank to deal with.

"A case of self-murder has been committed, for a man lies dead in his home; here is his address," and a card with a name and address was handed to the chief.

"It was a case of revengeful suicide—a blow to be struck from the grave at me, that I should hang for his murder. It was diabolically well-conceived, and unless you and your ferrets can prove me guiltless, I will scarcely escape the gallows, as the revengeful man planned it should be."

"My dear sir, your statement is a most remarkable one, indeed! A man commit suicide purposely to convict you of his murder? I never heard of such a monstrous crime. Who are you? I must know all."

"I am an artist; my name is Ormond Dewhurst, and my address is on this card, for there is my studio, my home."

"I know you by reputation, Mr. Dewhurst, and that you are considered a rising artist. I am exceedingly sorry you have become involved in this most peculiar trouble for I can plainly foresee, unless you can furnish full proofs of your innocence of such a serious charge, you are in imminent peril of your life."

"I can furnish no substantial or unquestionable proofs of innocence, or rather, will not do so. The dead man was once my friend, but he died my bitterest foe—my revengeful enemy. This note I received this afternoon from him and I answered it in person."

The chief took the note and read aloud:

"MY DEAR ORMOND:—

"My failing health warns me that the end is not far off, and wishing to die at peace with all the world, I ask you to forgive, forget the past and come and see me to-night, for I will be all alone, my servant having gone to the country on business for me."

"I inclose a key that will admit you; so come to the front room, second floor."

"Believing that you will not refuse my, I may say, dying request, I remain,

"As in the olden time,

"Yours,

"ALLEN GERARD."

"So you answered this letter in person, Mr. Dewhurst?"

"I did, sir, of course."

"Well?"

"I found him apparently a sick man, and, after some conversation, he asked me to go to a certain address and bring back with me a lawyer who dwelt there. I obeyed, as far as the going was concerned, but found not a house in the block named—nothing but vacant lots; and going to a drug-store to consult a Directory, I discovered no such name as the one given me. Returning to the house of Mr. Gerard, and entering with the key as before, feeling sure that he had made a mistake, to my horror I found him lying dead on the floor, a bullet through his brain, a revolver, with one shot missing, near him,

and a note upon the table with these words, as nearly as I can remember:

"'Fool! I never forget or forgive! I die by my own hand, but you will hang as my murderer, and then, though in my grave, I am yet
YOUR NEMESIS.'"

"Where is that note, Mr. Dewhurst?"

"Unfortunately, sir, I left it on the table; but you will find it there, so we will at least have its testimony as against the theory of murder."

"Mr. Dewhurst, upon your own words I must commit you to prison, to await the action of the coroner."

"I expected that, when I came here to surrender myself. I can see, sir, that you discredit my story, that you really regard me as guilty of that heinous crime; but, it is for you to prove my guilt or to establish my innocence; it is for the law to set me free, or to hang me, on circumstantial evidence alone, for the murder of Allen Gerard, for I can here and now assure you that I will do nothing whatever to clear up the mystery of that tragedy. I am your prisoner, sir."

"You are a very remarkable man, Mr. Dewhurst, and force upon me a duty which I must accept—to prove your innocence or to hang you, as the evidence may determine."

Deciding to take his prisoner with him to the house of the dead man, the chief called two officers; a carriage was ordered, and the four were driven rapidly up-town.

It was a pleasant, two-story brick house, with a large yard upon either side, but in a sparsely settled part of the city.

With the key in his possession, Ormond Dewhurst opened the front door; the light in the hall was burning dimly, and the party ascended the stairs to the second floor, front room.

It was a combined library and sitting-room, handsomely furnished, with every evidence that one of cultured taste dwelt there.

And that dweller was lying upon the floor, a dead man, for a bullet wound was in his temple!

Near him was the revolver, with one shot missing, and in a handsomely embroidered dressing-gown and slippers, the dead man lay as he had fallen.

Stepping quickly to the combined desk and table, Ormond Dewhurst said:

"Here is the slip of paper, sir, containing his last words on which I must rely to—

"My God! there is not a trace of writing upon it!"

The chief took the paper and saw that it bore no writing!

"I laid it there, sir, after the reading—utterly astounded by its threat and dismayed by its perfidious intent. It is the identical piece of paper—Ah! it was written with ink that fades after an hour's time—with phantom ink; and—and—"

The chief finished the sentence, as the accused hesitated:

"And that scrap of paper was the only direct proof of your innocence, Mr. Dewhurst?"

"The only proof, I fear. Truly the Fates are in league against me!" and the young artist, realizing the full extent of his peril, was deeply distressed, and, for a moment, cowered before the officer, whose keen scrutiny seemed to penetrate to the very soul of the man before him.

"Come!" was the chief's stern command, as he placed his hand upon Dewhurst's arm.

"To prison?"

"To prison!"

CHAPTER II.

A PAIR OF VOLUNTEER FERRETS.

"PLEASE, sir, may we speak to you for a few minutes?"

The words were uttered in a low, sweet voice, and addressed to the chief of police, as he sat alone in his office, looking over his morning mail just one week after the arrest of the young artist, Ormond Dewhurst, for the murder of Allen Gerard.

The chief looked up impatiently and with surprise, for he never received visitors, at that hour of the morning—looked up to behold an exceedingly pretty girl of sixteen, with an intensely earnest look in her lustrous

eyes as they modestly yet fearlessly met his own.

With her was a boy of the genus gamin, from twelve to fourteen, bright, intelligent, but not betraying the very neat appearance of the girl.

"How did you get in here?" asked the chief.

"There was a fight around the corner, sir, and I told the officer on duty he had better go there, and when he went away to send some one to the spot, we slipped in, for it is very important for us to see you, and we knew he would not let us in."

The chief smiled at this ingenious method for gaining admission to his private room and good naturedly addressed them:

"Well, as you are here, tell me what I can do for you?"

"We want to be detectives, sir."

"You wish to be detectives?" echoed the surprised officer.

"Yes, sir, my brother and I."

"Who are you?"

"I am Florette, the Flower Girl, sir, and boys call my brother the Newsboy King."

"Yes, sir; Kit, the King of the Newsboys, because I sell more papers than any two of them; but some of 'em calls me Kit the Ferret, because I've put the cops onto several gangs of crooks, sir."

"I have heard of you, Master Kit, and heard only what is good, so that is to your credit, while I have seen you, Florette, selling flowers around the hotels. What are your real names, and where do you live?"

"My name is Flora Earldon, sir; but Mr. Dewhurst called me Florette, and I liked it."

"Mr. Dewhurst?"

"Yes, sir, the artist."

"What do you know of him?" asked the chief, with increased interest.

"Oh, sir, so much! for I know that he is not guilty of the terrible murder of which he is accused."

"Have you proof of this, my girl?"

"Only, sir, that I know he would not do such a thing; he is too good and noble, he is indeed."

"What is Dewhurst to you, little woman?"

"Our friend, our benefactor and guardian. Two years ago he saved me from being kidnapped, one night, by designing men, who, it was supposed, had some reason for carrying me off, but what the reason was I do not know. You see, sir, our dear mother had just died then, and we were left alone to make our way in the world; but Mr. Dewhurst gave Kit money to buy papers, and set him up in business. Then, sir, he paid me well for being a model for a painting of a Flower Girl, an Italian Street Singer, Little Barefoot, and other things he painted. It was that way that Kit and I were able to have pleasant rooms and live respectably; and, besides, sir, I sold lots of flowers to gentlemen coming out of the hotels. But now, you have poor Mr. Dewhurst in prison, and say he is a murderer, and the papers tell such terrible stories about him; so we wish to be detectives and prove that he is not guilty, and that is what has brought us to you, chief."

"How can you do so, children—how can you help refute the evidence against the prisoner?"

"We will find a way, sir, as we know the city well, and the people. We have some money saved up to help us along in the work, and will spend it all in his cause."

"Please, sir, let us be detectives, won't you?" and the earnest eyes looked appealingly upon the kindly disposed and deeply-interested officer.

"My girl, at first I held a hope that there was a possibility of Mr. Dewhurst's innocence of this crime; but we find that he will say nothing of his past life, and his portfolio of drawings show that for ten years or more he had been a world-wide wanderer, for there are sketches bearing dates and names made in Mexico, South America, Europe, and, in fact, nearly all over the world."

"What we can find out about him is, that he ran away from home as a youth, that the man he is accused of murdering is his half brother who was left a large fortune by his father's death, and which, did Allen Gerard die a bachelor, Ormond Dewhurst would be the heir-to."

"By the death of his half brother, Dewhurst would have inherited this large fortune, from his half brother, with whom he was not on speaking terms, but who, being ill, sent to him at the last to make up the breach between them.

"Dewhurst can only say that his half brother hated him—that, feeling he had the consumption, and must die within a year or two, he preferred, rather than suffer, to take his own life, and in doing so let him be branded as his murderer, thus being revenged upon him, for a wrong he, Dewhurst, will not speak of, though the other is now in his grave.

"With his volunteered confession that he went to see his brother, in answer to a letter he received from Gerard, and which letter I have, and going upon an errand for the sick man, he returned to find him dead, and a note stating that he, Gerard, had taken his own life to have his brother hang as his murderer, the case is strengthened by the fact that Dewhurst can neither produce this note, nor give any conclusive evidence that it was not a bold and cleverly-concocted plan to get Allen Gerard out of the way in order that he, the next in order to inherit, might come in possession of the fortune.

"Now, in the face of all this array of circumstantial evidence against the accused, you wish to try and prove his innocence?"

"Yes, sir, I do wish to try, for, unless some one proves that he is not guilty, the law will hang an innocent man. It sometimes happens, you know, and it would make you feel very bad if you discovered, when poor Mr. Dewhurst was in his dishonored grave, that he was not guilty, and that you had refused to let Kit and I try and prove his innocence, with your consent and assistance.

"Won't you, sir?" and again the pleading look, while Kit added:

"Please, chief, do let us take a hand in, for, though we are young, we know a heap! You can just bet your shield on that!"

A moment of silence; then the chief said, with business-like decision:

"I will do so, yes; I will swear you in as specials, and give you your badges, and if you can save that man from the gallows, you will have made a noble return to one who has been so good to you; and besides, by showing that justice can err, you will contribute to the great mass of testimony bearing upon the danger of resting upon circumstantial evidence in capital cases. I admire you, children as you yet are, and most sincerely hope you may not work in vain."

"Oh, sir, I thank you!" and tears of gratitude filled the beautiful eyes of the girl.

"And here's to you, chief!" and the boy doffed his dirty felt hat with comical enthusiasm. "Sis and I will never dishonor these badges, you can bet!"

CHAPTER III.

A BEAUTIFUL ENIGMA.

"You wished to see me, the servant informed me, though you sent no card," and Myrtle Sturgis, handsome, brilliant, and haughty, swept into the library of her elegant city home, to find there Florette, the Flower Girl.

Unabashed by the hauteur of a woman who was then "the rage" in society, one who refused suitors by the score, no matter what their wealth and position—who, showing preference for none, had become known about the clubs as the "Beautiful Enigma"—Florette met her gaze unflinchingly and answered:

"Yes, Miss Sturgis, I have come to have a talk with you, if you please."

"I have no time to listen to tales of woe, so you can spare your breath and I will send you some money by my servant."

"Miss Sturgis, I am not a beggar; I have not come here to seek money, but justice—from you."

"Girl, what do you mean?" and the angry blood flushing the face of the young woman made her but the more beautiful.

"I mean, Miss Sturgis, that the trial of Mr. Ormond Dewhurst, an honorable, noble, wholly innocent man, for murder, commences to-morrow, and I have come to you to save him!"

If fired at random, it was a dead-center shot, for the angry face of Myrtle Sturgis became suddenly deathly pale, and she leaned heavily upon the back of the chair by which she was standing.

For a moment she could not speak, or did not; but, suddenly, with an effort, she regained her self-control and asked in a voice that had lost its melody of tone:

"Why do you come to me in his behalf—murderer as he will be proven to be?"

"I come to you because I believe you can help him—may even save him from the gallows."

"Oh! Miss Sturgis, will you not do all you can—tell what you know of Mr. Gerard's death—to save an innocent man from being hanged for the crime?"

Florette advanced a step nearer, and had dared lay her little sun-bronzed hand upon the arm of the beautiful woman.

It was quickly shaken off, as though it had been a viper's touch, and then followed the words:

"Girl, you are either mad, or are playing a game of blackmail to extort money!"

"If mad, I will see that you are taken care of, for I am not heartless though men call me so; but, if you are trying to force hush money from me, I will place you in the hands of the police."

"I am neither mad, nor a blackmailer. I am in solemn earnest in begging you to tell what you know about Mr. Dewhurst and the murder, or suicide, whichever it may be, of Mr. Allen Gerard."

"I know nothing, my acquaintance with Mr. Gerard having ended long ago, while I never even knew Mr. Ormond Dewhurst, only having heard of him as an artist of great promise, and now as the slayer of his half-brother."

"That is all that I can tell you, or any one else, girl."

"Not all you can but will tell me, you mean?"

"You are insulting, and I will call my servant to show you the door."

"No, do not do so, for that will only cause me to feel more bitterly toward you than I do."

"In what way have I ever wronged you?"

"Not me, but Mr. Dewhurst, in not appearing to fight his cause against merciless Justice that so often commits the monstrous wrong of punishing or dishonoring the wholly innocent."

"You do know Mr. Dewhurst, as I am well aware, and that is why I came to beg your aid—you know him very well; and your acquaintance with Mr. Gerard did not end long ago, as I can readily prove, and knowing what I do, I am convinced that you can help, if not wholly clear, Mr. Dewhurst."

"Will you not do so, Miss Sturgis?"

It was not a child who addressed her, and Myrtle Sturgis seemed to realize the fact; it was a brave-hearted, high-minded woman, bent on a mission of mercy and justice.

The society belle was silent for a moment and then asked, in a low tone:

"What are you to Mr. Dewhurst?"

"Only a friend who believes in his innocence—who knows he is innocent!"

"Who are you?"

"Florette, the Flower Girl."

"Did you know Mr. Allen Gerard?"

"He has often bought flowers of me, that is all."

"Did Ormond Dewhurst send you to me?"

"He did not! He never would have done that, not even to save his life!"

"Are you telling me the truth?"

"Yes, Miss Sturgis—the truth, and nothing but the truth."

"Then why did you come, if you knew Mr. Dewhurst would have forbidden you?"

"Because I hoped that you could and would save him—that you, somehow, hold the secret of the whole miserable business."

"Why do you assume that?"

"My brother Kit had several times taken notes from Mr. Dewhurst to you, and once from Mr. Gerard to you, so that I knew you were intimately acquainted with both men; and from other evidence which I can produce I am sure your testimony will at least shed new light on the case."

"In Mr. Dewhurst's studio are two portraits of you, one as a young girl, the other as you look now, which is proof enough, assuredly, that he must be an old friend. That

alone was reason sufficient for this call, was it not?

"Why did you tell me an untruth, Miss Sturgis, and say that you did not know him? Did you have any special motive in trying to conceal the fact?"

The Beautiful Enigma evidently found herself in an unpleasant position, for she bit her lips nervously, her shapely hands clung hard to the back of the chair, and the color in her face came and went by turns.

But soon she answered firmly:

"I but told you the truth. I never knew Ormond Dewhurst, for that is an assumed name. When I knew him, in the past, he had not seen fit to sail under false colors, as now!"

"I am sorry, girl, that I cannot save your lover, for such I feel he must be to you, but I can do nothing for him, and I will not, I promise you, if you will keep your visit to me secret, appear against him and thus do him great injury by the testimony I would under oath have to give."

"I believe there is nothing more for me to say."

Florette, astonished and depressed, could say no more, but at once left the room and the house, murmuring:

"He not Ormond Dewhurst? What new mystery is this?"

But, once in the street, she turned, and half shook her clinched fist at the mansion.

"Those last words were a threat to scare me off. She does know more than she will admit and I will yet force her to speak!" she vowed, with almost fierce emphasis.

The Fair Ferret would fight to a finish!

There was a new enigma to solve:—what was that beautiful woman to the accused artist?

Florette would know!

CHAPTER IV.

THE LAW'S VERDICT.

"GUILTY!"

So said a jury of "twelve good men and true" of Ormond Dewhurst.

"Condemned to die!"

So said the judge.

The evidence against the prisoner had all been heard; there was, indeed, little said in his favor.

A man against whom nothing was known of real wrong before the night of Allen Gerard's death, had, after that tragic event, been painted in blackest colors.

His lawyer, pocketing his fee, had tried to save him, but could do nothing to counteract the alleged evidence and the thrilling eloquence of the district attorney, who knew just how to sway a jury and influence a judge.

The judge had charged with a belief in the guilt of the prisoner, and the jury had so decided.

The nerve of the accused man won the admiration of many, but was regarded by others as the bravado of a hardened criminal, and whose fine face and comely manners were used as a cloak to hide a wicked heart.

When asked what he had to say, why sentence should not be passed upon him, in a voice without a tremor, with eyes that did not quail, he said:

"Justice is infallible, the laws cannot err; I abide by its decision, accept the destiny of an ignominious death; but with my last breath I will assert—Not guilty as proven!"

Back to his prison went the condemned man, now, with the death sentence hanging over his head, to occupy the murderer's cell, while the world, with a sigh of relief, wagged on as before.

Granted permission to see him in his cell, by the chief of police, was Florette the flower girl, the self-constituted detective who had worked so hard to save him.

"So you have not forgotten me, Florette, though the world has turned its back upon me?"

"No, Mr. Dewhurst, and I have come to you to help me save you."

"Why, child, I am already lost, and before long will be executed."

"You could take an appeal?"

"With the same result, and but prolong the misery to all concerned."

"Mr. Dewhurst, you can save yourself."

"Yes, if escape from this living death were possible."

"Escape such as you hint at is impossible; but you can save your life."

"Ah! how do you mean?"

"You know that you did not kill Mr. Gerard; you may believe that he took his own life, but, if such is not your belief, you know who is the murderer!"

"Why, Florette, what has put this in your little head?"

"I came to you once before, and asked you to give me evidence that would clear you, for I felt sure you were acting a part, perhaps shielding some one."

"You refused to help me, and that but convinced me the more you were playing a part."

"Your trial is over, now, and you are sentenced to death."

"None knows that better than I, Florette."

"I waited one week to see if any one would come to prove your innocence, but no one has come."

"And no one will," was the pathetic response.

"Not unless forced to do so."

"I do not understand you, Florette."

Then pointedly came the question, while the girl's eyes seemed to read the very soul of the man:

"Mr. Dewhurst, what is Miss Myrtle Sturgis to you?"

As though he had been struck a hard blow, instead of asked a question, Ormond Dewhurst staggered back, while over his face swept a pallor like death.

"What do you know of her?" he asked in a voice quivering with feeling if not of apprehension.

"Answer me first, what is she to you?"

"Nothing whatever, now."

"What was she to you?" persisted the resolute girl.

"Let the dead past bury its dead, Florette, for I will not answer."

"Then she shall!" was the earnest response.

"Florette, beware! Do not rake over old embers that may spring into a blaze; do not re-open wounds that time has healed; but let all remain as it is."

"Mr. Dewhurst, you are deceiving me, and so are others; but I will not be beaten in my endeavor to save you—if not with your aid, why then without it! The truth shall not be masked; I will do the unmasking!"

"Where did you hear of Miss Sturgis, Florette?"

"It matters not when or where, for—"

"Did she send you to me?"

"She did not! and I am not coming again until I prove to you that, where the officers of the law could ferret out all to prove you guilty, there are those who will try to prove you innocent. If circumstantial evidence can hang you, real evidence shall set you free!"

And the prisoner was again left alone with his thoughts, which now seemed more bitter than ever.

CHAPTER V.

A FAIR FERRET.

"WELL, my fair detective, with all we could do, we were unable to prove the innocence of your artist friend, Dewhurst; and it was too bad, for he was a splendid fellow, clever, talented, and had a grand future before him."

"Why men of his caliber go wrong is one of the mysteries of crime I have been unable to fathom; but, sit down, Miss Florette, for, unlike Othello, your occupation is not gone, with the sentence of Dewhurst, as I wish to keep both yourself and your brother on my roll as detectives."

Florette sunk into the chair offered her, in a tired sort of way, and responded:

"Mr. Dewhurst is sentenced to die on the gallows, sir, but he has some two months yet to live, and much can be done in that time."

"Ah! He intends to appeal then?"

"On the contrary, sir, he refuses to do so, but I intend to make an appeal."

"To the governor, eh? It will do no good, young lady!"

"No, sir, not to the governor, but to you."

"I can do nothing."

"I thank you, sir, for what you did do,

for you and your men gave us most valuable aid, but with the light I had I could do no more, then; I had not time; but now I have time, and I appeal to you to trust me, to help me, for I am to-day more convinced than ever that Mr. Dewhurst is innocent, and that, if he would, he could save himself."

"Why does he not do so, then?" abruptly asked the chief.

"I will tell you a secret, sir: it is because he is a victim—a sacrifice; to save himself others must suffer, which he will not permit!"

"Ah! this is a new light upon his actions which I had never suspected; but, what proof have you of what you assert?"

"Circumstantial evidence."

"Stealing the law's thunder," suggested the chief, with a smile, and he added:

"I'd have given a month's pay to have heard you fire that shot at the judge."

"It is the truth, sir. I have no direct proof, only circumstances and suspicion, and that is why I have come to make my appeal to you."

"What would you have me do, Florette, for if Dewhurst is not guilty, then he must not die," and the chief was very much in earnest now.

"I have some money, sir, as I once told you, which Kit and myself have saved up, and I am willing to expend it to find out what I wish to know."

"What is that?"

"Well, sir, the officers of the law seemed so assured of the guilt of Mr. Dewhurst they did not devote their time to seeing what they could discover of his past that might have been in his favor."

"I half believe you are right."

"I know I am right, sir, and I will tell you that, while often waiting in Mr. Dewhurst's studio, I have looked over his folio of sketches, and I remember one which has a number of scenes in his earlier life; in fact, he has almost made his sketches serve as a diary of his past, and I recall that he was born in Virginia, was reared in a grand old home, and from all I could figure out from the penciled scenes I saw, his life was an unhappy one, rendered so by an overbearing brother, and a father who never felt much love for him, the son of his second wife."

"Remember, I gleaned all this, sir, from the sketches and what was written beneath them, and they seemed to tell of an unhappy boyhood, until some great sorrow drove him from his home and made a wanderer of him."

"What else have you to say, Florette?"

"You remember, sir, he willed the contents of his studio to me, and I have left all these just as they were."

"Yes, I recall it now, and I would like to look over those folios."

"I have the key, sir, of the studio, and Kit and I have spent hours there looking for links in the chain of evidence we hoped would yet save Mr. Dewhurst."

"It is from what I discovered there that I ask your aid, for a mere girl could do nothing, and Kit is too young, though he wishes to go; but you will send one of your best detectives, or man in whom you have the most perfect confidence, sir."

"Send a man where, Florette?"

"To Virginia, sir—to the boyhood home of Mr. Dewhurst."

"Ah! I see what you wish, now."

"I have jotted down names, sir, dates, and gotten together a number of sketches of people, incidents and scenes, and a clever man can go there and find out just why Mr. Dewhurst left home; why he changed his name; who were his foes, who his friends, and who it is he is shielding now, and sacrificing himself to do so, for when I know all this I can put my hand upon the one who knows whether Mr. Gerard was murdered or really did commit suicide."

"My fair little ferret, you are a born detective, and I will do as you request, giving you the very best man in the force."

"It will be well for the detective who goes on this mission to go with you to the studio; so say when you will be there and we will meet you."

"At three o'clock, sir, and I will have Kit with me, for he is awfully clever, and has given me a number of good suggestions."

"Yes, one who holds the title of King of

the Gamins, must needs be clever, for his constituents are a rare and motley crew."

"Do you know that you almost give me hope that Dewhurst may yet be saved?"

"He will, he shall be!" was the determined response of the fair, young ferret.

CHAPTER VI.

A WHEEL WITHIN A WHEEL.

THE appointment in the studio of Ormond Dewhurst was faithfully kept by all concerned, and the detective whom the chief of police brought with him was a man who might pass as a clergyman, a lawyer, or a well-to-do merchant.

The artist's paintings were gone over, the numerous souvenirs of travel, a few of his younger days, and then his portfolio of sketches, commencing away back when his artistic talent first began to reveal itself.

As Florette had aptly said, his sketches, with scenes and dates, portraying incidents as they did, were almost a diary of his life, and so Norman Moore, the detective, seemed to regard them, for he jotted down many notes, and made selections to carry with him.

So it was that Norman Moore, detective, and the cleverest man on the force, set out for Virginia, armed with all the data that could prove a foundation for the escape from the gallows of a man whom the chief now began to dread might be sacrificing himself to shield others.

In just three weeks Detective Moore returned from Virginia, and when Florette and Kit met him they eagerly scanned his face to read there a ray of hope for the condemned.

As well might they have tried to read a book in the darkness of night, for Norman Moore had schooled his features to become as unimpressionable as marble.

"You have seen the chief, sir?"

"Yes, Miss Florette, and have had a long talk with him. He sent me up to see you! I have something to tell you of interest to yourself."

"Then you have made some discoveries in favor of Mr. Dewhurst?"

"Let us first get this matter of interest to you and your brother off our hands."

"Mr. Dewhurst painted a portrait of your mother for you from an old miniature, I believe?"

"Yes; it was the one I showed you in his studio, sir."

"Well, when I was in Virginia, I stopped one day of storm at a handsome old home, where I was most hospitably received by the owner, a gentleman in declining years, who insisted that I should remain over the next day, which was Sunday, with him."

"As I was seeking information I was glad to do so, for he dwelt near Mr. Dewhurst's old home, and he seemed just the man to help me."

"But, imagine my surprise to find in his library a portrait, the counterpart of the one Dewhurst painted for you!"

"My mother's portrait, sir?"

"Yes, and I spoke of having seen a similar one, and instantly the gentlemen became interested, so I told him of you and your brother Kit, and the result was that I am able to bring you good news, for, opening his heart to me, I was told that his only daughter had married without his consent, a young man who was a roving music teacher, she having run away with him."

"Her father had discarded her, then; but, years after, he had seen a notice of her husband's death, in a railroad accident, and in vain had tried to find her to take her back to his heart and home."

"Your father's name was Earldon, I believe?"

"Yes, Mr. Moore."

"And your mother's name before she was married was—"

"Farwell, sir! Ellen Farwell."

"And the gentlemen who told me of his daughter is Alexander Farwell, and, a rich man. He lives alone in his grand old home, awaiting the coming of yourself and brother to gladden his declining years, for there is no mistake; I have investigated thoroughly; he is your grandfather, and glad am I that you and Kit will no longer have to be waifs of the streets of this great city. In fact, I became so interested in the discovery I had made in your case, that I remained all the time I was in Virginia at his home."

"Mr. Moore!" and Florette was upon her feet in an instant, her face flushed, her eyes flashing with indignation, as she continued:

"You were sent to Virginia on a mission of life and death, not to ferret out my mother's unfortunate history; and though I thank you for what you have done for us, I must say that I feel that you have betrayed your trust."

"I knew that my mother was disowned by her father on account of her marriage; I am aware that she was well born and was an heiress; while I certainly wish to let my father's faults be forgotten, now that he rests in the grave."

"I did not know that my grandfather had sought to find our mother, who died here in poverty and sorrow, sending no word to him who had disowned her."

"Oh! that she could have known that she was forgiven! Now I understand what the wicked men meant, who attempted to kidnap us, and from whom Mr. Dewhurst rescued my brother and myself, when they said the old man would pay a big price for us, and they'd see that he did."

"But, it is not of our good fortune I wish to speak, but of poor Mr. Dewhurst's misfortune; and as you seem to have left him to his fate, it remains for me to see what can be done for him, for, with death in sight, time flies quickly."

There was a twinkle in the detective's eyes as he gazed upon Florette's indignant face; but he did not interrupt her, and only when she had finished speaking, said:

"I did not need to go elsewhere, Miss Florette, as Mr. Farwell told me all that I cared to know about Dewhurst's antecedents; and I only took trips of a day away from his home to verify certain facts and secure legal proof that I deemed necessary to place in your hands, and which I will now do."

"Forgive me, for I wronged you in saying that you had betrayed my trust and left Mr. Dewhurst to his cruel fate," and tears welled up into the beautiful eyes of the young girl, quenching the fire of anger that had flashed there, a moment before.

CHAPTER VII.

BROUGHT TO BAY.

"Ah, it is you, girl? Your card reads Miss Earldon," and Miss Myrtle Sturgis crushed the bit of pasteboard in her hand as she saw who it was awaiting her in the library.

"Yes, Miss Sturgis, I have called again, and as my name is Earldon, I had a right to put it upon my card."

"May I ask if we are wholly alone?"

"Why do you ask?" demanded the belle.

"For your sake and mine, as it will be well to have no listeners to what I have to say."

The flush left the beautiful face, the red lips were bitten nervously, and then stepping to the door, Myrtle Sturgis closed it, for something about her young visitor commanded respect and deference.

"What have you to say?"

"Mr. Dewhurst has just one month to live, unless you save him."

"I can do nothing for him, as I once before told you."

"You must save him!"

"Do you dare threaten me, girl?"

"I do not threaten; your own deeds in the past do that."

Miss Sturgis was on her feet in an instant. "I will have you turned into the street!" she cried.

"One moment! Call a servant and there will be another to hear what I have to say."

"Girl, you are trying to extort money from me, and rather than have any trouble with you, I am willing to pay—"

"Do not offer money! It shows the weakness of your cause. I am not a beggar nor a blackmailer, as I told you once before. In fact, I have lately learned that I am to be an heiress, so no money you can offer can even influence me."

"What is your business with me?"

"Sit down and quietly hear me, and when you have heard, say yes or no as to what you will do."

"Now, Miss Sturgis, is this your handkerchief?"

"It is! Where did you get it?"

"It has a crimson stain upon it, you see! Nay, don't faint; that is a womanly weakness you should be above, just at this time!"

"This handkerchief, a pair of gloves, with clasps upon them, bearing your name, and a bracelet, a gold band with a ruby in it—rather an appropriate stone for the occasion on which it was last worn—were given to me the night of Mr. Allen Gerard's mysterious death."

"Who gave them to you?" gasped Miss Sturgis, white as the ceiling above her.

"A gentleman who met me on the street when I was selling flowers. He seemed glad to meet me, and asked me to keep them until he told me what to do with them, at the same time remarking that he had found them in a room where a death had occurred, but that I must not say anything about it to any one."

"And have you?"

"Not until to-day, when I went to him and demanded to know how and where he got the gloves, handkerchief and bracelet."

"Did he tell?"

"In the face of facts I placed before him he was compelled to speak—he could no longer suppress the truth."

"What did he say?" in the same hoarse whisper.

"He told me that he had gone to Mr. Gerard's home to visit him, in answer to a conciliatory letter he had from him, and had been asked to go upon an errand, after a lawyer."

"He found that he had been sent upon a fool's errand, for upon his return Mr. Gerard was dead, leaving a note that he had taken his own life and thus was a Nemesis even in his grave!"

"But, Mr. Dewhurst found that the note was written with an ink that faded out within an hour; that, during his absence, a visitor had been in the house, for a large sum of money Mr. Gerard had with him—and which he said he wished to have him put in bank the next day—was missing, while upon the desk were the gloves, handkerchief and bracelet."

"Now, Miss Sturgis, I do not accuse you of being the one who murdered Mr. Gerard—hold! look at this badge, and you will see that I come here with authority," and as Miss Sturgis read on the silver badge "Special Detective" she sunk back in her chair without a word.

"That you do know whether Mr. Gerard took his own life, or was murdered, I am sure, and I will tell you that I come here bristling with facts—terrible facts for you."

"I can tell you that, as a girl of sixteen, just a year younger than I am, you won the heart, among many others, of Ormond Gerard, now known as Ormond Dewhurst, for he took his mother's maiden name when driven from his father's home."

"You loved him, or professed to do so, for you were engaged to him, and when, through the cruel persecution, the falsehoods and unbearable conduct toward him of his half brother—who also influenced his father against him—he left his home, you broke with Ormond to pledge yourself to Allen Gerard."

"Allen Gerard went abroad for a couple of years, and, a year after his return, you were to become his wife."

"But it was said that the match was broken off, when, in reality, there was a secret marriage between you, sanctioned by your mother, but not known to his father or to others."

"When Allen Gerard's father died he left a peculiar will, leaving his elder son in full control of his large fortune; but, should Allen die, then Ormond was to be the heir, while, should the latter never appear to claim it, within a stated number of years, or die within a given time, all was to go to the daughter of a woman whom the old gentleman had loved in his earlier years."

"It is needless to say that the person referred to was your mother, and you were to come in possession of the fortune, under the circumstances named."

"Your mother was poor, but she moved with you to this city, and then came the news that Allen Gerard had married when abroad."

"Give him the benefit of believing his wife had died, and that he wedded you in good faith, but the truth remains that you were recently divorced from him, though he still allowed you the very generous income you have lived on here in this city."

"Hating his half-brother, as he did, from

earliest boyhood, as one who stood in his way and whom you loved, Allen Gerard, believing that he was going to die, and fearing you would marry Ormond yet, determined, rather than suffer, to end his own life quickly, and let his brother be run down as his murderer."

"While Ormond Gerard was away from his brother's home, you went there. You saw your chance, with one brother a suicide, the other hanged—for you now hated Ormond because he did not return to you—to get the fortune, by the terms of the will."

"Now, Miss Sturgis, you can prove whether Allen Gerard was a suicide or was murdered."

"Which was it?"

Myrtle Sturgis had listened like one dazed to the unraveling of the story of the past, making no comment.

Now, however, she said, in a decided tone:

"I went to his home, yes, to get my month's income, for, as his first wife was dead, I felt that I had a just claim upon him; but he was dead when I got there, and he was too great a coward to have taken his own life."

"I have nothing more to say."

"But I have, Miss Sturgis!"

"I wish to say that, unless you come out and admit your secret marriage to Allen Gerard—the divorce we will not speak of—and unless you admit your visit to his house that fatal and fateful night, and saw him lying there dead, left your gloves, handkerchief and bracelet there, and saw Mr. Ormond Dewhurst Gerard go into the house, which was the case, and saw him read that note of the suicide, before it faded—I say, if you refuse to do this act of justice, then will I bring you before the court of justice, which this time will not commit an error in becoming a Nemesis, to charge you with the murder of your maid, Adele Delaporte, when you discovered in her the real wife of Allen Gerard!"

There was a low moan, a white, upturned face and clasped hands, as, dropping upon her knees at the feet of Florette, the proud and wicked woman cried:

"Mercy! Mercy, I beseech you! I will do anything you wish!"

CHAPTER VIII.

THE FINISH.

"Not Guilty as Proven," was a startling headline for the papers to come out with, instead of having to chronicle the death on the gallows of Ormond (Dewhurst) Gerard.

The truth was wrested from a woman, at last—no other than the Beautiful Enigma, and who remained an enigma, still, save to a chosen few.

She could not see Ormond Gerard die, so it was stated, and therefore confessed to her secret marriage with Allen Gerard; to their separation for years; to her going to him the night of his death; to her finding him dying, by his own hand, and to discovering the note upon the table which had been penned a few seconds before he took his own life, and which did state that he died by his own hand, yet desired to have the crime fastened upon his half-brother.

There was much that she might have told, but what was confessed was enough to prove that Ormond Gerard had known what she could tell, yet had not betrayed her, and to the end had insisted to his fair detective that the whole black truth should not be known.

So Myrtle Sturgis was allowed to go free, glad to escape with her mother to scenes where she was unknown, yet bearing with her a wrecked life, for the still small voice of conscience would not be hushed, and, sleeping or waking, there was a skeleton in the innermost closet of her heart.

It was different with Ormond Gerard, for he came out from under the shadow into the sunshine of a happy life, where, as master of a large fortune and fine old home, he awaited impatiently the ending of Florette Earldon's schooldays, when he could claim her as his wife.

As for Kit, he devoted his life to caring for his grandfather and the large estate, and never tired of telling how circumstantial evidence had very nearly hanged the hero of his life!

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